VILLA WELLMER ASSOCIATION

# Basarab House of Wallachia

## Heraldry and genealogy

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**2016**

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# 1. Introduction

Medieval heraldry evolved since the beginning as visual art associated to the western-type chivalry movement, which after the Great Schism of 1054 were both Latin and Catholic. This identitary symbolism at personal level hardly matched with the Eastern feudalism, Byzantine and Orthodox par excellence. Having a well-educated nobility, inheritance from the Roman patriciate, the Byzantines identify themselves by written text (titles, signature, monogram, seal), emblems remaining, where the case, state and institution's appanage.

*Seal of Nikita, imperial fleet admiral, 9th century:*
*Obverse: St Constantine Cross on pyramidal pedestal encircled by holy aura*
*Reverse: text describing the seal owner (name, functions)*

*Signet ring of Michael Zorianou (around 1300, Epirus Despotate*

The only Byzantine emperor who held great admiration to the medieval chivalry system developed in the West was Manuel Comnenus (1143-1180). Unfortunately, his political and military actions hasten the Byzantine Empire disintegration and his hectic lifestyle, fully complying with the mentality of a western knight, contributed to the general Oriental current of rejection, among other Latin features, of heraldic productions. Apparently, there is a path of continuity between the graphic symbols marking the shields of the Roman legions, those carried by the Carolingian *comites* and those of the Frankish knights, but the Greek Orthodox Church choose to demonize the heraldic-style graphic signs as a pagan manifestation.

Nevertheless, some of imperial representatives used over time several heraldic-type symbols in their sealing emblems: the eagle (single or double headed), the cross (patriarchal or Latin), the Crescent (symbol of Byzantium fortress), the Sun, etc. True enough, these representations on shields, banners or even badges became more frequent towards the end of Feudal Era, after Byzantium known the occupation of the crusader barons bearing heraldic symbols.

# 2. Wallachian coats of arms depicted in armorials Wijnbergen, Gelre, Richental and Schrot. A critical view

Among Romanian heraldic sources we find sealing and epigraphic relics, monetary issues, polychrome manuscripts, documents and other domestic use or parade objects. Obviously, not being a primary concern of feudal authority, heraldry of the Carpathian area is much poorer than in the West, but we still can observe the synchronism with the general European line, in direct connection with political, military, cultural and trading activities in which historical figures from the Romanian space took part. Due to the scarcity of local sources, it is not surprising seeing how the first heraldic representations referring to noblemen from the Romanian-speaking space, Wallachia included, appear first in the West.

**Wijnbergen Armorial** (c. 1265–1280), among many real or imaginary coats of arms, depicts in the last chapter entitled *Kings* at no. 1289, *le Roi de Blaquie*, blazoned as *barry of twelve or and gules, two lion paws in saltire sable*, and at no. 1307 *le Roi de blaqe*, blazoned *barry of ten, or and gules*. Since the armorial is no more conspicuous than that, it's difficult to say what king of Wallachia, respectively of the Vlach, was referring the herald. But it's not impossible to decipher.

One foundation myth for the gold-and-gules burely coat of arms is linked to Tsar John „Iohannitsa" Kaloyan (1197-1207), 3rd ruler of the Bulgarian Empire from of the Asen dynasty. He would have captured in battle the flag of the king of Thessalonica, important vassal of the Latin Emperor of Constantinople. As remembrance of the victory and appreciating the chromatic compound, Tsar Kaloyan took the idea of blazoning himself with those colours, only changing stripes number and orientation[1]. Gold and red must have been the colours of the ribbons adorning the Tsar's battle lance, ribbons mentioned by the Latin chronicler Henry of Valenciennes without mentioning their colours. Historian Grigore Jitaru launched the hypothesis that John II Asen (1218-1241), ascending to the imperial throne in his turn and assuming the new coat of arms, added in 1221 on his shield *two crossed lion paws*, heraldic augmentation occasioned by a matrimonial alliance with the kingdom of Hungary. Symbolic meaning of this cadency would have been *brotherhood of two great kings*[2].

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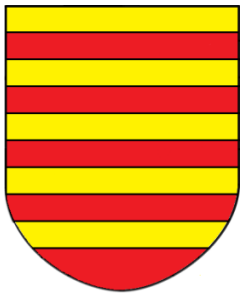
[1] A coat of arms more affined with Kaloyan's is the one of crusader brothers Thierry and Villain de Looz, vassals of Brabant. Their family emblem was the same with Iohannitsa's: barry of ten, or and gules. Villain lost his life in a skirmish with Kaloyan's Vlach warriors in 1206 near Rusium.

[2] Grigore Jitaru, *Contributions about the coats of arms of the Asenid and Basarab dynasties*, in Annals of the Moldovan national Museum of History, Chisinau, I, pp. 27-36 (1992) and II (1995) pp. 19-40. Author underlines that this coat of arms used by John II Asen when marrying Anne-Marie, daughter of king Andreas II of Hungary, means „alliance between two powerful kings". Few years afterwards, John II Asen introduced a new coat of arms: *barry of 8, in canton dexter gules, parted per pale and per fess or, four encircled crosses or, which was coat of arms of the Latin Empire or Romania*. The plain barry of 8 would be later transmitted from Asenids to Basarabs together with the title form „Io" (from *Ioannis*) added to the voivodal name and used in official documents.

Some peculiar charges in *saltire* (Moorish heads pinned on cut branches) will appear later as heraldic symbol of Bulgaria in the armorials of Conrad von Grünenberg (1480)[3] and Martin Schrot (1581)[4], but losing the ordinaries described by Wijnbergen. Two charges in saltire appear for the last time in 1593 drawn in black and white on Gerard de Jode's map and then migrating subsequently from Bulgarian heraldry into the Bosnian (i.e. Korenić-Neorić armorial, 1595).

*„le Roi de Salenique"*
*(No. 1295 Wijnbergen)*

*„le Roi d' Blaquie"*
*(No. 1289 Wijnbergen)*



*„le Roi de blaqe"*
*(No. 1307 Wijnbergen)*

*Bulgaria (Schrot)*

Anca and Nicolae-Şerban Tanaşoca believe that lion paws are a heraldic concession obtained in connection with the Latin Empire of Constantinople. They have a double argument: first, Flemish origin of the first two leaders, Baldwin (1204-1205) and his brother Henry (1205-1216), lion being House of Flanders' heraldic symbol, and second, the matrimonial alliance of 1213, when Emperor Henry married Mary, the late Tsar Kaloyan daughter[5].

At the verge of 13th century, the only kings of Vlach recognized officially in the West were the Tsars from the House of Asen: Peter and Kaloyan. German scholar and clergyman Ansbert, participant to the 3rd Crusade (1189-90) led by Frederic Barbarossa, and to which is assigned "*Historia de expeditione Frederici Imperatoris*" called Tsar Peter "*Blacorum et maxime partis Bulgarorum dominus*" (ruler of the Vlach and the most part of the Bulgarians), and "*imperator Blacorum et Cumanorum*" (emperor of the Vlach and Cumans). In his turn, Kaloyan received in 1204 a golden crown and a royal banner from pope Innocent III, insignia of recognition as *"Bulgarorum et Blachorum rex"* (king of Bulgarians and Vlach)[6]. Besides hesitation in titles conferred by the West, Tsars were always designated

[3] Konrad Grünenberg, *Das Wappenbuch Conrads von Grünenberg, Ritters und Burgers zu Constanz*, BSB Cym 145 in Muenchener DigitalisierungZentrum, Digitale Bibliothek, folio 78. On the same leaf we have "Herzog dispott in der meren Walachey" depicted as *argent, rampant lion sable crowned and langued gules*.

[4] Martin Schrot, *Wappenbuch des Heiligen Römischen Reichs und allgemeiner Christenheit in Europa*, 1581, shows the elliptical blazoning „de Schildt roth/die Äst gelb/köpff schwarz", red shield/yellow arms/black heads, not mentioning the *saltire* position of charges. Same armorial depicts Wallachia's coat of arms as „rother Löw im weissen Schildt", red lion white shield, who is part of Bulgarian heraldic tradition.

[5] Anca Tanaşoca, Nicolae-Şerban Tanaşoca, *Unitate romanică şi diversitate balcanică. Contribuţii la istoria romanităţii balcanice (Romanesque unity and Balkan diversity. Contributions to Balkan Romanic history)*, Biblioteca Culturii Aromâne, www.proiect.avdhela.ro, Ed. Fundaţiei Pro, Bucharest, 2004, pp. 107-109.

[6] Alexander A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453*, vol. 2, University of Wisconsin Press, 1952, in chapter *Byzantium and the Crusades*, page 442.

as rulers over people, not territories. Only William of Rubruck wrote in 1255 about *„Blakia que est terra Assani"*, in context of naming the lands controlled by Tartars. In conclusion, it is logic to consider *le Roi de blaqe* at no. 1307 to be the Tsar of Vlach and Bulgarians himself.

If Wijnbergen is presenting real historical coats of arms, certainly they were common knowledge for heralds in Armorial's time, so we presume they were not some recent acquisitions. Therefore, *le Roi de blaqe* should be one of Iohannitsa Kaloyan's successors until about the middle of the century and no further. They are: Boril (1207-1218), John II Asen (1218-1241), Kaliman I Asen (1241-1246), Michael I Asen (1246-1256), Kaliman II Asen (1256), Mitso Asen (1256-1257) and Constantine Tikh (1257-1277). Only the first five of them are direct descendants of Kaloyan, although all of them supposedly claimed and bear this emblem as accessory of legitimacy. It's hard to say who this elusive armiger was, according to Wijnbergen herald. We only can speculate. Was he the one with the longest reign? Or the most successful warrior? Maybe the shrewdest politician? All of this could be only John II Asen. Others are more or less from weak to disastrous, each bringing his contribution to the progressive empire's dissolution.

Another discussion is about *le Roi de Blaquie* (no. 1289). In the historical context, this one seems to be a high-ranked figure of the Second Bulgarian Empire ruling over a region with many Vlach, so many such as the name Wallachia would be suited. Adding to that, he should have had proven relations of vassalage or matrimony with Latin or Hungarians. During the whole 13th century, a number of military leaders appear in historical documents, north and south of Danube River. In Wallachia from today's Romania are listed in year 1247 four local leaders bearing titles characteristic to Northern Vlach society: voivodes Lytvoy and Seneslav, kenezes Ioan and Farcaş. In Bulgaria lived in that time frame three commanders of this kind bearing the Greek imperial title of *despot*: Alexis Slav, Jacob Svetoslav and George Terter[7]. Historian Ivan Biliarsky underlines that this imperial office *"guaranteed to a great degree a strong and independent position for the despot with respect to the Bulgarian ruler*[8]*"*, so the occupants could be seen as kings by a distant French herald.

Alexis Slav (1208-1228) ruled over a territory in Rodope Mountains and opposed to Tsar Boril. He was theoretically entitled to display the striped shield, being nephew of Kaloyan from one of his sisters. But he also was the vassal and son-in-law of Latin Emperor Henry of Flanders (Hainaut), from which he received the title of *despot*. This fact suggests that Tanaşoca hypothesis about lion paws augmentation could be also applied to him. Moreover, he was recognized by

[7] Between 1197 and 1202 another Vlach leader ruled in Southern Bulgaria, Dobromir Chrysos of Strumica and Prosek, who bear the title of *archont* for the Byzantine Empire, but the short interval of his historical relevance made us to avoid speaking extensively of him.

[8] Ivan Biliarsky, *Word and Power in Medieval Bulgaria*, Koninklije Brill NV, Leiden, the Netherlands, 2011, pp. 280-290.

Latin Empire as ruler in an area known as homeland for a large population of Vlach shepherds between Mesta and Struma valleys. His capital from 1215 onwards was Melnik, name who should be kept in mind. Remembrance of this Wallachia *(Blasquie)*, along with emperor Henry's promise to create for Slav a Great Wallachia[9] *(Blakie la Grant)* by conquering Boril's land, may be kept in that *"meren Walachey"* depicted by Richental and Grünenberg in the 15th century. We don't forget also the other Great Wallachia of the time *(Megali Vlahia)*, mountainous area of Thessaly who carried this name throughout all the middle ages.

Other two despots were not from Asen blood. Jacob Svetoslav (c.1250-c.1277) was lord of Badin (today Vidin) on the Danube and was linked only by marriage with Tsar Constantine Tikh, not an Asenid himself. His army fought in the western part of Danubian Wallachia and lost the Severin area to Hungarians in the 1261-1263 war. This much was his connection with Wallachians, hence is a weak candidate for *king of Wallachia*. So is George Terter, related only as brother-in-law with Tsar John III Asen, and from Cuman descent. Finally, we should add that specific colours for despot's attire were red, gold and purple/dark azure, and his heraldic beast the double-headed spread eagle or, if more than one, eaglets. *(besides: image of a despot from 14th century, fresco in Dolna Kamenica church – source: Wikipedia).*

A second imperial rank existed along, bearing another Greek title: *sebastokrator*, one step lesser then a *despot*. The title was used in Bulgaria until 1277, when it disappears. We find sebastokrators during the reign of Tsar Boril, who appointed Strez and Alexander, or John II Asen, having as sebastokrator his own brother, another Alexander. Reigns of child-emperors Michael I (his sebastokrator was one Peter) and Kaliman II were challenged around Vardar River (Macedonia), an area with dense Vlach population, by the boyar Constantine Tikh of Skopje. At least by birth right, Constantine was not entitled to display the shield burely. Maybe he was Vlach, but not an Asenid. When he finally acceded to the throne by election and marriage, and claiming the imperial name Asen, sebastokrator was already Kaloyan of Sredets, possible son of Alexander Asen, ruling in the north-west of the empire. He would have the right to bear the Asenid stripes but in an area around today's Sofia would be difficult for anyone to call him *king of Walachia*.

[9] According to chronicler Henry of Valenciennes, contemporary with the events and successor of Villehardouin, which uses these names.

As for attire, the Bulgarian sebastokrators wore red and gold, but Ivan Biliarsky draw attention to the abundance of blue for the military garments they used, as horse's and personal harness and campaign tent[10]: *"What is noticeable here is the use of colour blue, which seems emblematic for this title. The other evident tendency is towards similarity with the despot"*. The portrait of sebastokrator Alexander Asen, a real Maecenas for the Byzantine chronicler Niketas Choniates, who painted him, shows on his attire some different heraldic beasts. Dutch heraldist Hubert de Vries, who commented this picture few years ago, suggests that the heral-dic griffin could be associated as badge for the rank of sebastokrator and also with the imaginary land of Griffony, placed by later heralds somewhere in the Balkans[11]. *(besides: image of Alexander Asen wearing a long tunic, a hymation, decorated with large medallions gules bearing a griffin encircled by 5 foxes pursuing each other, all argent – Wikipedia).*

The noteworthy conclusion is that both, despot and sebastokrator, being selected from the emperor's relatives, have the right to use (and they did it on large scale in their parade attire) the main two colours from Kaloyan's shield: gold and red. Additionally, they were entitled to use the colour blue and zoomorphic representations specific to Balkans' heraldic bestiary: double-headed eagles, eaglets, griffins and foxes. We don't see any lions or parts of them.

Historical fact is that Asenid brothers John II and Alexander, underage nephews and heirs-apparent of Tsar Iohannitsa Kaloyan, fled to safety north of Danube after their uncle's murder in 1207. Wisely, they were parted, in order to maximize the chances to preserve the rightful throne succession. John II, as first imperial prince, made the longer trip towards the Russian Galych, considered as safer. Brother Alexander apparently did not follow him. The chronicles do not mention both living together in exile. He remained somewhere in the Cuman-controlled area of north-Danubian Wallachia, most likely with the Vlach relatives of the late Tsar. Have they possibly displayed the Kaloyan-inherited coat of arms as visual expression of succession claim along the wandering decade that preceded dynasty restoration, meaning the John II accession in 1218? It could be a

[10] Ivan Biliarsky, *Word and Power in Medieval Bulgaria*, Koninklije Brill NV, Leiden, Netherlands, 2011, p. 300.
[11] Hubert de Vries, *National Arms and Emblems. Past and Present*, online on Hubert-herald.nl, *Sebastokrators and Despots*.

good explanation for placing in time the burely arms emergence north of Danube at the end of 13th century: the Asenid connection. In Romanian historiography this hypothesis is carried forward, *le Roi de blaqe* from Wijnbergen being identified by Dan Cernovodeanu with *Lytvoy woiavode* (c.1247-1279) of *terra Lytva*, the most prominent of the 4 Wallachian leaders mentioned in the Hungarian *Diploma of the Johannites* from 1247, and one of the possible forefathers of Basarab House.

Anca and Nicolae Tanaşoca insist for the south-Danubian origin of the *king of Vlachs*, considering that *„the* [Wijnbergen] *armorial cannot be invoked as a document regarding the Wallachian heraldry"*, but applies only to the Asenid arms. We already offered two options for this Southern source of both *king of Wallachia* and *king of Vlachs*: the binomials Tsar-despot or Tsar-sebastokrator. In our view, most plausible pairs would be Tsar John II Asen and despot Alexis Slav of Melnik, or Tsar John II Asen and sebastokrator Alexander Asen[12]. Both are old enough for the Wijnbergen herald to be viewed as "classical". Unfortunately, a troubled and complicated Balkan region could induce in Wijnbergen armorial some uncertain or obsolete information. The main reason is the increasingly less communication of the West with this part of Europe after year 1261, when Latins lost Byzance for good.

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind this: at the end of the 13th century, a French herald knew that Vlachia/Wallachia, wherever this territory was placed, used to have as arms *shield barry or and gules*, with or without lion paws in saltire, maybe even both of them, successively, in different political moments. We also know that the westerners confused Bulgaria and Wallachia since the Crusader chronicler Villehardouin. This imprecision is largely nonessential, given the obvious interdependencies between the two territories during the Second Bulgarian Empire and afterwards, with frequent dynastic alliances since late 1200, when the first centralized Wallachian state emerged. Lacking other information, we cannot determine a certain family link between *le Roi de Blaquie* and *le Roi de blaqe*. Heraldically speaking, this link exists. We are inclined to embrace southern origin hypothesis of Tanaşoca. Both armigers described in Wijnbergen Roll were from the Balkan area, with at least one of them having excellent relations with the Latin Emperor.

The barry or-and-gules coat of arms without cadency charges (no. 1307) must be the one originating in the heraldic trophy captured by Kaloyan's men, as the legend says. We even found besides Boniface of Montferrat, king of Salonica,

[12] Based on involvement of South-Danubian dynasts in the Hungarian civil war from 1264, Alexandru Madgearu suggests other binomial, Constantin Tikh and Jacob Svetoslav, in *Dominaţia mongolă şi desprinderea românilor din Muntenia de sub dominaţia regelui Ungariei (Mongol domination and separation of Romanians from Hungarian king's domination)*, paper published in *Revue of Military History*, no. 12/2016, pg. 5.

killed near Messinopolis (today Komotini, Greece) in 1207, another possible armiger with similar arms. He is Villain of Looz, the ill-fated Brabançon knight killed by Vlachs near Rusium (today Keşan, Turkey) one year earlier. Chronicler Geoffrey of Villehardouin described both events[13]. Looz arms were *barry of ten, or and gules*, although Wijnbergen herald give us *barry of six, or and gules* (no. 836). King of Salonica had there *or, four bendlets gules* (no. 1295). One of these two is base for the original coat of arms used by the Tsar and his extended family.

Recently reviewing the coin issues of the Asen emperors, we found in the Iconodule numismatic collection a silver trachy issued by John II Asen, available for auction sale. Surprisingly to a coin that has already been described on two occasions by Bulgarian specialists[14], we noticed a possible unique occurrence of the Asan House burely coat of arms, not previously mentioned.

*John II Asen: Æ trachy (30 mm, 2.34 g), Thessalonica imperial mint*

On the obverse is the bust of the Savior with his right hand bent in the blessing position, accompanied by the classic legend IC XC (Jesus Christ). The reverse contains two characters. On dexter appears the Tsar dressed in a hlamid that covers his left hand and which has his elbow attached to an oval ceremonial shield with its interior towards the viewer, and to senester St. Demetrius in full armor and sword on hip giving the sovereign a scepter tipped with a seven-ray star. The imperial shield is clearly shaped only towards the noble character, but has as handgrip a strap (Byzantine *ochanos*) that surrounds his elbow, flexed in the classical position of the shield bearer. What is interesting on this shield: at its upper side there are clearly three embossed, parallel and horizontal areas, which can be interpreted as **heraldic bars**. In its lower part, the shield is caught in the area of coin's maximum wear, which affects also the feet of the two characters, possibly the reason why we lack a complete picture.

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[13] Geoffrey de Villehardouin, *Memoirs* or *Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople* translated by French T. Marzials. London, J. M. Dent, 1908, pages 108 and 133.

[14] A. Raduchev, G. Zhekov, *Catalogue of Bulgarian Coins*, Sofia, 1999, P. Youroukova, V. Penchev, *Bulgarian Medieval Coins and Seals*, Sofia, 1990.

This could be the proof of the existence of the plain burely shield as Asen House coat of arms at least in the time of John II Asen. Next, the prominence of Bulgarian Empire implied for his leaders complicated relations with Latins and Hungarians, both valiant promoters of chivalresque heraldry. Of course, this diplomatic and matrimonial dance would have heraldic consequences for the Tsars themselves, not just for second or third level figures.

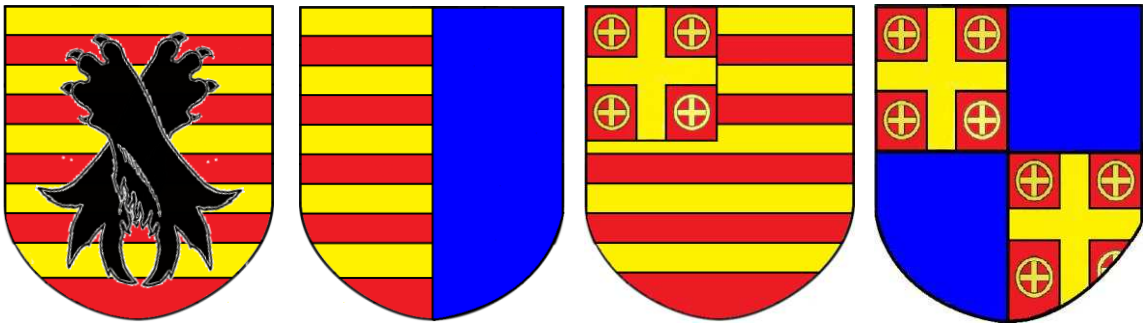
Despots, sebastokrators and boyars, all were more than happy to receive such imperial signs of appreciation. As Byzantine epigones, they love to adorn their outfits, and heraldic cadency was a good occasion to do some more of that. So, all Asenids, great or small, must have customized in time their shields and banners, for one political reason or another. But you have to understand the frame of mind of a Tsar. Kaloyan was unhappy in 1204 with the **royal** banner sent by pope himself for the ceremony of coronation and replaced it before long with the design of an ordinary war trophy, but one who had the merit of being chosen by **imperial** caprice. You may say he did not understand the exercise of Latin chivalry, but he definitely understood imperial conduct.

This being said on the emblem no. 1307, it remains the blazon with crossed leonine paws, no. 1289, who is referring rather to a vassal, not to an equal partner

of the one accustomed with the magnanimity of heraldic augmentations, Emperor Henry I of Constantinople. The most suitable character, fulfilling all conditions, was despot Alexius Slav of Melnik. Nevertheless, if he bore by birth right the Kaloyan arms, shield enriched by marriage and imperial benevolence, the two-paw saltire presented by Wijnbergen may be not the augmentation we expect from heraldic standpoint. In fact, Emperor Henry used a coat of arms blazoned *gules, cross cantoned by four crosslets encircled or*, and not any more the old lion of Flanders.

In order to exhaust the discussion, we can consider four heraldic acceptable cadency options:

a) Elements/parts of the Flemish lion, proposed by Wijnbergen herald,
b) Underlining the title of despot by marshalling Kaloyan's shield with a blue field, as herald Gelre will proceed later in his armorial,
c) Cantoned with arms of medieval Romania (Latin Constantinople), as shown in the *Armorial Universel du Heraut Gelre* for the Shishmanid Tsar John Alexander arms,
d) Quartered of Romania 1 and 3 and despot tincture 2 and 4, as for John Sratsimir, Tsar of Badin and son of John Alexander, in the same armorial.



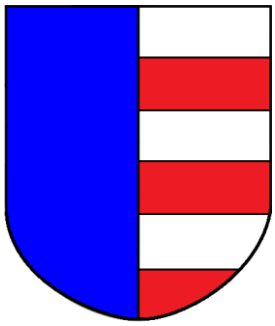
*Three possible Asen House cadencies as concession or augmentation from the Latin Empire of Constantinople: (a) lion paws in saltire, (b) dimidiated by despot violet/dark blue, (c) cantoned of Romania, (d) quartered by Romania 1 and 3, and „despot" 2 and 4*

The second armorial just mentioned above which we will comment now is the **Universal Armorial of herald Gelre**. It was created between 1370-1395 by Flemish chronicler Claes Heynenszoon alias Gelre, in the service of the Duke William I of Guelders, a stern supporter of the Teutonic Order. Gelre managed to leave in posterity one of the most important medieval roll of arms, meticulously painting on 121 sheets of parchment no less than 1755 coats of arms from across Europe, focusing on the area he knew best: Netherlands-Rhineland. For the eastern side of the continent, it is very likely that he benefited of information provided by knights fighting alongside the Order in Oriental Prussia against Lithuanian. When returned, they reported to Duke William, himself a relentless traveller.

Such must be done also the knight-errant Daniel de laMerwede, who made no less than five expeditions with the Teuton knights. During the first he visited

also Constantinople and Bulgaria (1359), and in the fourth (winter of 1365-66) he travelled through Wallachia, Hungary and Poland[15]. Silent witness to politic and military events of the Duchy of Guelders, Heynenszoon received updated information in a greater extent than his fellow heralds. However, we see how for the most of Eastern Europe's coats of arms, names of individuals and fiefs are written in a fanciful manner, with many misspells. This makes us believe that the initial data have been degraded by transmission from one person to another, each having different nationalities and levels of understanding. Moreover, the Flemish trans-lation worsened things further. Even when he procured the heraldic information himself, for example in England where he accompanied his patron for investiture as Knight of the Garter, phonetics created him some difficulties. Since the nineteenth century, three different scholars tried to put order in the Gelre armorial, identifying coat of arms, names, fiefdoms and territories[16]. Considering the most recent edition of Paul Adam-Even (1971), we will discuss several coats of arms from our area of interest.

From file 52 (verso) to file 55 (front), counting from no. 500 to 547, we find the arms of the king of Hungary and his vassals. Between years 1370 and 1382 Hungary and Poland were part of a personal union under the sceptre of Louis I of Anjou, so it's no surprise to find listed here Polish knights. Top eight armigers are 8 dukes from Bohemia, Silesia and Poland, followed by count Thomas of St. George (at Gelre: *Grave v. Sunte Jorien*), voivode Bartos of Poznan (*Baris v. Desenberch*), count Ulrich of Cilly (*Her Uulric Zwaert*), and probably Stephen Lackfi, voivode of Transylvania (*Her Staeffen van die Werkere*). In this succession of high vassals and regional leaders, the next coat of arms is of particular interest to our study, because it could describe for the first time in an occidental armorial the personal coat of arms of a Wallachian voivode. It is blazoned *shield azure dimidiated by barry of six, argent and gules*.



The armiger, noted by Gelre as *Her Raeskin v. Scoonavaer*, was identified by Adam-Even as *Raczek Wloskowic* of Moravia. The presence of a Moravian on the list of Hungarian vassals and magnates is, however, not so plausible, knowing that Moravia was not at that time part of Hungarian *Commonwealth*. It was fief of the House of Luxembourg, who ruled also the Bohemian kingdom, which has dedicated not one, but two separate chapters in the armorial, on files 33 and 68-69. In addition, all armigers after no. 513

[15] Werner Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des Europäischen Adels*, Teil 1, Jan Thorbecke Verlag Sigmaringen, 1989, pag.52. Contribution of Daniel de la Merwede was celebrated by herald Gelre in the fourth chapter of the Armorial (*Praise for brave knights*), where are depicted eight coats of arms, the fourth being the one belonging to knight Daniel (site *wappenwiki.org/index.php/Gelre_Armorial_Folio_14*).

[16] V. Bouton (Paris/Brussels, 1881-1905), K. Regel (The Netherlands, 1885), P. Adam-Even (Neuchatel, Paul Attinger, 1971).

until chapter's end are only knights from Polish *Szlachta*. Thus, the lonely emergence of an insignificant Moravian knight between the great vassals of the realm and the Polish nobles is less plausible than ending the list of dukes, counts and voivodes with one of similar eminence, for example the voivode of Wallachia. The same coat of arms is found within the Burgund *Bershammar Roll*, largely using Gelre as inspiration, but there they are attributed to *Raczek de Vleskovic*, alias *Derslawiz*[17].

At Gelre, the Middle Flemish name *Scoonavaer* is in fact a rebus. It forms with theme *scoon*, who refers to *cleanliness*, *beauty*, or, metaphorically, to *glory* or even *in-laws*. *Aver* meant around 1200's[18] *scion*, *descendant*. Together, *glorious scion*. If we read *vader* instead of *vaer* we have directly *father in law* (formed just like the French beau-père). Anyway, the possible results seem to be rather a surname linked to some noble connection, and not an indication of fiefdom[19].

Instead, the patronymic W*loskovic*/*Vleskovic* at Bershammar is obviously stating ethnicity, as *włosko* in Polish means *Italian* (and by extension, Romance language speaker), in Slovakian means *mountains* (see *Muntenia* as Romanian synonym for Wallachia) and in Czech translates plainly as *Wallachia*. Together with the belonging suffix *-ovič*, the name identified by Adam-Even turns in ethnonym: *the Wallachian* or *the Mountaineer*.

True, in the last quarter of the 14th century Wallachia was nominally under Hungarian suzerainty, reason for placing its ruler at the end of its great vassal's list. In the time frame when the armorial was compiled, voivode was Radu I from the Princely House of Basarab. We believe that this is the source-name for the Flemish-distorted *Raeskin*. And that *Raczek* from the Bershammar armorial should read in fact *Radek*, the Slavic variant for *Radu*.

As for explaining *Derslawiz*, we think of German *der Slawisch* (*the Slavic*), individual belonging to the Eastern Rite who used Slavonian as liturgical tongue. This was true at that time in Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia and Moldavia. In conclusion, we translate the whole name as *Radu of Wallachia, the Schismatic*. This heraldic information must have reached Gelre through knights who opposed Radu in 1377 and 1382. Further details about the circumstances, in the chapter reserved to this prince.

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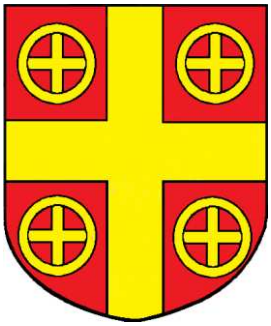
[17] See http://wappenwiki.org/index.php/Bershammar_Armorial_Folio_214.

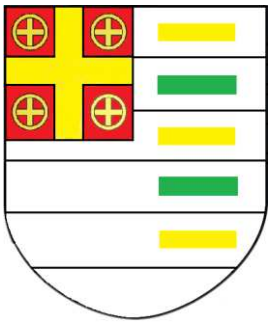
[18] See http://www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/aver.

[19] For impartiality of information, we note that in *The Honorary Table Panel* (*Erhentischtafel*), armorial from Oriental Prussia occasioned by the military campaign from 1385, indicates one *Racz von Schonanger* who, according to Werner Paravicini (op. cit., page 141), could be the same with Raeskin van Scoonavaer. Schönanger is the old name of today's village Orlóv (Borowa) in Poland. Let's mention that according to site *Germans from Russia Heritage Society*, http://www.grhs.org/vr/vc-other.htm, this German colony was founded only in 1783.

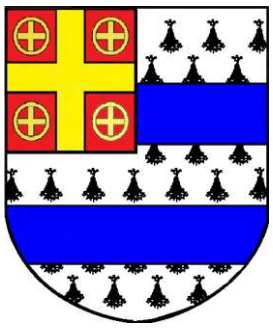
Towards the end of the armorial, on files 104 and 105, appear in succession a number of 5 coats of arms from the Balkan area and Asia Minor. They are of interest considering our cadency exercise from above in conjecture with the Wijnbergen Armorial, because it's combining the escutcheon of Romania (the Latin Empire of Constantinople) with some of its closest neighbours.



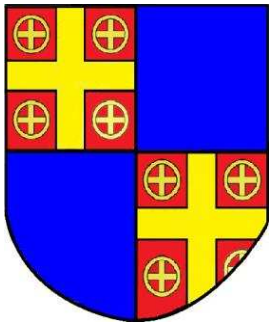
No. 1484: *Die Keyser van Constantinopel* emperor of Constantinople. This was John V Palaiologos (1332-1391), for which Gelre offers the arms of *Romania: gules, cross between four encircled crosslets patée, all or*. In truth, the Imperial House of Palaiologos displayed a slightly different coat of arms, instead of encircled crosslets having *four letters B (Βασίλειος) or*, an augmentation of the previous, perhaps as symbol of imperial continuity.



No. 1485: *Die Keyser van Bolghieres*, emperor of Bulgarians. Although Adam-Eden indicates *Jean Assen II*, it is about Tsar John Alexander (1331-1371) of new Sratsimir dynasty, claiming himself paternally from Asen dynasty and by maternal descent from Shishman. When painting this shield, the herald hesitated to choose colours for *barry of six pieces*. On good faith, being aware of the change in Bulgarian dynasty, Claes Heynenszoon preferred not to put the Asenid *or-gules* stripes, waiting maybe for a review. Eventually, this hasn't happened. Adam-Even gives John Alexander's Sratsimir coat of arms as *or-sinople*.

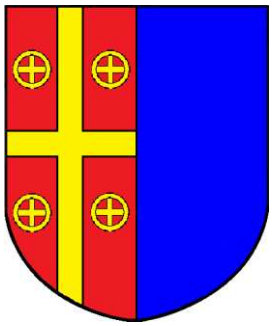


No. 1486: *Die Keyser van Troppezunt*, emperor of Trebizond. On the strip of land around this imperial city ruled Alexios III Megas Komnenos (1349-1390). After Constantinople fall, the first basileus of Trebizond, Alexios I Megas used as heraldic symbol *gules, two-headed eagle or*. We believe that the version proposed by Gelre, *ermine, two fesses azure, canton Romania*, is just an exercise of imagination, inspirational frame for the Spanish heraldist Alonso de Torres (1478), which gave in his turn *argent, four fesses black, canton Romania*.



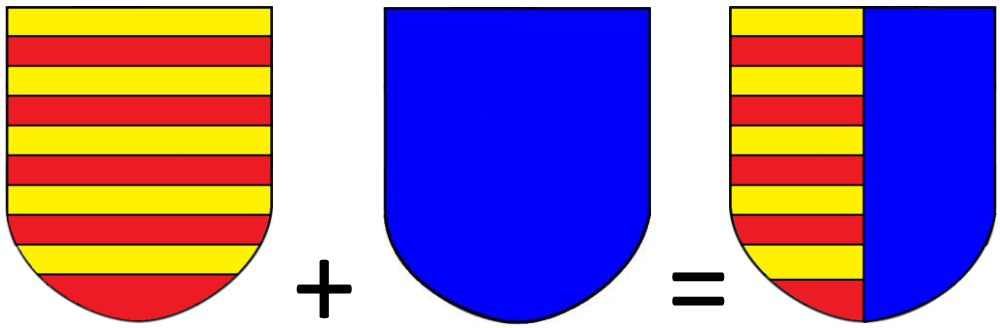
No. 1487: *Die Keyser van Boddiin*, emperor of Badin. Contemporary with the compilation of Gelre Armorial, Badin/Vidin was ruled by John Sratsimir (1356-1396). Although member of Sratsimir dynasty, he was also nephew of Basarab of Wallachia. Assigning him *quartered, Romania in 1 and 3, azure in 2 and 4* is interesting to assess the extent of Heyneszoon's knowledge about the chromatic meaning of the dignity of *despot* and

*sebastokrator*. It seems that he did know about the Shishman's Despotate of Badin, former part of the Asenid empire having as successor-state the small Tsardom of John Sratsimir.



No. 1488: *Die Keyser v. Vitric*, emperor of Trikala. It would be interesting to know how information about this ephemeral Balkan state reached Gelre. The invoked Emperor was Simeon Urosh Palaiologos (1355-1370), despot of Epirus and Thessaly, self-styled in 1359 Emperor of Serbians, Greeks and Albanians. His supposed (attributed) arms, *Romania dimidiated azure*, strengthens our conviction that the herald knew about blue as tincture for the imperial rank of *despot* from a source accustomed with Balkan imperial subtleties, maybe even his much-travelled acquaintance, knight Daniel of Merwede.

Although it seems a fictitious coat of arms, if despot Simeon really bore blue on his shield, it was because he had knowledge of the heraldic colour of his rank, a general-Balkan practice initiated probably under the heraldic auspices of the Latin Empire. Therefore, following this trend, we believe that the augmentation conceded by emperor Henry to despot Alexius Slav of Melnik **was rather a marshalling of Asenid arms with field azure** than the grant of heraldic paws in saltire reminding the lion which Henry renounced for some time.



*Coat of arms Asen marshalled with „despot",*
*resulting a more plausible augmentation for Alexis Slav then paws in saltire as in Wijnbergen*

The Latin Empire symbols were preserved in the West, maybe as benign arms of pretence, although Romania itself had become history one hundred years earlier. Gelre uses Latin Constantinople arms in various combinations in all five coats of arms from Balkans and Asia Minor presented, but hardly all of them are accurate. Likewise, Kaloyan's striped shield persisted in heraldry with a tincture representing Sracimir dynasty and Tsar John Alexander as successor of both precedent imperial houses, Asen and Shishman. Apparently, the gold-and-green binomial was in the 13th century the new heraldic formula south of Danube.

However, the most interesting thing at Gelre is the association between the notion of Despotate and the field *azure*, changing the old significance of *despot* and *sebastokrator* titles from imperial rank to feudal ruler as lord of the land. In this view, the Despotate is an autocephalous territory headed by a military and administrative leader recognized by the Orthodox establishment and related with a recognized Imperial House. This principle can be extended to north-Danubian Wallachia, formerly part of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire. If it is so, then this is the sense of the blue tincture shown on the shield no. 513 of *Radu of Wallachians, the Schismatic*: the armiger is placed as *glorious scion* in the Balkan imperial genealogy using the Asen-Shishman-Sracimir connection and as *despot* of his own country. Confirming this status as an apparently widespread perception, we will see further another occidental herald assigning the title of despot to another Wallachian voivode.

A rich armorial was prepared upon the great **Ecumenical Council of Constance**, held within the time frame 1414-1418. His author, Ulrich Richental, had the commendable ambition to record all coats of arms of participants to this momentous politic and religious event. To avoid overlooking someone, he compiled by geographical criteria a series of lists including generically, besides clergy and laity actually present, all significant leaders of the time and all countries whereof Richental had knowledge. Therefore, in the lists appears Wallachia with the coat of arms *argent, crowned lion gules*, a duke-despot of Great Wallachia blazoned *crowned lion* but with no colours mentioned, a great duke of Ascholott *"next to Wallachia"* having as emblem *shield azure* (Balkan despot's colour), *three Moor's heads couped sable bound with scarves or,* or one Thebemur of Wallachia bearing *gules, crowned lion between crescent in base and six-rays star in chief, argent*[20].

*„Herczog dispott in der meren Walachy"*

*„Herczog von Ascholott hider der Walachye"*

*„Thebemur aus der Walachei"*

The time frame, a lion as heraldic charge and a six-rays star specific to Wallachian tradition make us identify Thebemur as the envoy of prince Mircea the Elder of Wallachia, who used indeed the image of a rampant lion on his privy

[20] In his paper *Boierii lui Ştefan cel Mare. Conexiuni genealogice şi moşteniri heraldice (Stephen the Great's boyars. Genealogical connexions and heraldic heritage)*, published on www.academia.edu with Lucian-Valeriu Lefter, Tudor-Radu Tiron is suggesting the Moldavian origin of Thebemur, identifying him with boyar Dragomir Albul, father for Giurgiu of Frătăuţi, nobleman of 15th century who sealed documents with a seal bearing a lion.

seal[21]. Not familiarized with the Romanian noble titles, Richental translated *voivode* by a hesitant *duke-despot*, seemingly trying to find for him a rank and place among the European rulers. How can you name otherwise a leader who has a territory of the size of a Western duchy, but is a scion of the old Balkan imperial establishment? So, that duke-despot of Great Wallachia was actually the famous Wallachian prince who objected to John of Nevers lack of strategy in the ill-fated Crusade of Nikopolis (1396) and Thebemur was the boyar Dragomir of Segarcea, who was present at Argeş on June 10, 1415, as witness to a charter of his master, voivode Mircea. Dragomir's trip to the Council as representative of a ruler who was trying to regain the grace and friendship of the Emperor Sigismund is chronologically plausible. Once introducing his embassy to the Western world leader and his retinue, he returned just in time to witness the sole document in which is mentioned[22].

We find big differences between information collected by heralds in the West. Obviously, Richental did not know the Wijnbergen Roll, nor the Universal Armorial of Gelre. Although contemporary with the latter, he had no access to this important heraldic source. In the end, his opus become inspiration for the aesthetic work (1480) of Conrad von Grünenberg addressing the same event. In **Grünenberg Armorial**, work using the revolutionary printing method, recently discovered, we notice the explanation accompanying a coat of arms representing *two Moorish children with an arm above head, adossed*. The arms are attributed to one duke-despot of Great Wallachia, which embassy came to Constance with a certain Thobermur. We can recognize here the mentioned Thebemur. Grünenberg give again the oriental-imperial title of despot to prince Mircea, but obviously by printing error, **the arms associated to the text are inverted with those besides, the rampant lion**.

*1. „From His Serenity prince/duke Despot of Greater Wallachia/the embassy came with Thobermur".*
*2. „From the duke of Zaltaygen in Greece/lord to Griffony"*

[21] Constantin Moisil, *Sigiliile lui Mircea cel Bătrân (Seals of Mircea the Old)* in Archive's Magazine-VI, 2 (1944-1945), pp. 256-286.
[22] *Documenta Romaniæ Historica*, B series Wallachia, vol. I, doc. 38, pp. 80-82.

The number of printing errors, fictitious people and invented coat of arms are here upsetting high in comparison with other rolls of arms. This was first observed by Hermann von der Hardt in the seventeenth century. Ruthless critic, this Saxon chronicler harshly dismissed as credible source the entire armorial. A group of Romanian researchers led by Cornel Bârsan extensively analysed the armorial and rejected too any representation with Moors as belonging to Wallachian heraldry[23]. Probably these arms are either invention or confusion, like is the case of the duke of Zaltaygen in Griffony.

The last heraldic compilation of interest is the **Wappenbuch des Heiligen Römischen Reichs und allgemeiner Christenheit in Europa** (the Armorial of the Holy Roman Empire and of universal Christianity in Europe), work printed by Martin Schrot and Adam Berg in Munich, year 1581. Lacking a lot of reliable and recent information from Eastern Europe, it has the flaw of perpetuating in the Occidental heraldic space the same errors made by Ulrich Richental nearly two centuries ago. The armorial had the same ambition of universality, making comprehensive lists of political and religious actors of the known world, but the heraldic information is much more modest. A large number of outlined shields remained ultimately empty.

Regarding Wallachia, Richental traces are visible in two different places. First, at *"Farb Register"* (Colours Index), the text shows the blazoning of all coats of arms contained. Wallachia appears listed between Windischmark (today in Slovenia) and Transylvania. Counting the Central-East European principalities in the chapter reserved for the Habsburg territories (Hungary, Bohemia, Austria and Silesia) is consistent with Schrot's book ambition to advertise and support House of Austria's claim of hegemony over neighbouring states in order to substantiate a crusading-shaped front against Ottomans. Wallachian arms, adorned by a ducal crown, shows *silver, lion gules*, just as in the armorial of Constance.

*Arms of Wallachia and Transylvania in Schrot-Berg armorial*

[23] Paper from 11 Oct. 2014 entitled *Rebusul heraldic al Ţării Româneşti descifrat – „legenda celor trei negri mititei"! (The heraldic rebus of Wallachia deciphered – „legend of the three little negroes"!)* published on www.istorie-furata.blogspot.ro/2014/10/rebusul-heraldic-al-tarii-romanesti.html.

The shield with ducal crown confirms nevertheless the country status of sovereignty, in direct contrast with Transylvania coat of arms, bearing no crown. Any Habsburg claims of suzerainty over these lands was in fact not more effective than a heraldic pretence, being denied by historical reality. In post-Mohacs era, the Carpathian principalities were vassal states of the Ottoman Empire, and the Hungarian kingdom, pashalic.

Further on page 253 are listed *"etliche Fürstentums so der Zeit Turkisch"*, several principalities currently under the Turk. First two are *Walachia maior* and *Walachia minor*. It's hard to say whether these two names referred to Moldova and Wallachia or to the two parts of Wallachia divided by river Olt, Muntenia and Oltenia, or even to the Southern Wallachies which existed in Thessaly, Pindus and Epirus. Obviously, the adossed Moorish children were taken tale-quale from Richental and just perpetuate a confusion. Finding in the work of the Swiss herald also the rampant lion of the duke-despot of Wallachia, Schrot found himself in difficulty: he has two coats of arms and only one fief, difficult to put on the map. Lucky enough, Dragomir of Segarcea is indeed originating from one land described later as Wallachia minor, namely Oltenia.

*1. Walachia maior (Greater Wallachia?): argent, two Moorish children with one arm raised adossed, arms in saltire.*
*2. Walachia minor (Lesser Wallachia?): silver, lion (gules?) crowned or, mullet in base and crescent in chief of same.*

In conclusion, we see how information in the West about heraldry in Eastern Europe was limited by lack of mobility and information. Heralds rarely had the opportunity to see armigers of these parts of the continent. On the other hand, travellers who visited these territories were diplomats, soldiers and merchants, social groups less interested in studying local heraldry. But where Westerners clashed on the battlefield with Easterner's bannered armies, like crusaders of Constantinople did, is very likely that the heraldic information was genuine, having as primary source people well trained in this field, like chronicler Villehardouin. Being French, his knowledge passed to French and Flemish heralds, geographically closer, like the ones who assembled the *Wijnbergen Roll* and *Armorial du Heraut Gelre*, and not to German heralds like Conrad von Grünenberg, Ulrich von Richental or Martin Schrot. Later on, western knights

fought occasionally alongside or against the Eastern Orthodox, but they rarely gave arms descriptions. Gelre was better informed by his Crusader sources and received notice of the Wallachian voivode Radu's coat of arms. As about the West and East gathering at the Council of Constance, it was a unique event which resulted, among other, in the description of Mircea the Elder personal coat of arms, about which more will be said in due course.

## 3. Basarab genealogy and recent investigation at Curtea de Argeş

We intend further to review the evolution of coat of arms worn by the first reigning dynasty of Wallachia, the Basarabs. Their heraldic emblem, like all medieval noble Houses in Europe, had a historical evolution in which stages can be identified. The first milestone would be the time of original embodiment, usually mentioned in Western heraldry as *foundation myth*. Due to documentary gaps, this moment in Basarab's history did not reach us. The second stage began when by military might, matrimonial alliances and political coagulation, the first Basarab took leadership of the land between the Carpathians and Danube River, rising to the status of member in the club of European sovereigns. Their heraldic symbols were now part of the diplomatic tools of the state and enjoyed public recognition. A third phase, without precise determination in time, is when the coat of arms is enriched by heraldic cadency at their member's choice, determined by major events like obtaining state sovereignty, territorial acquisition, or economic and religious independence.

In unequivocal historical documents[24], this potent family appears at the verge of the 14th century and it was analysed in detail by Romanian historiography. First written references to its members were issued by the Angevine king of Hungary, Charles Robert (1308-1342). Thus, in year 1324 is mentioned *„Bazarab woyvodam nostrum Transalpinum"*, in 1325 "*Bozarab Transalpinum, sancte corone regie infidelem"*, in 1332 it's mentioned the lineage, *„Basarab filium Thocomerii, scismaticum infidelis Olahus Nostris"* and in 1335 is pointed the descendance: *„Bazarab Olacus et filius eius"*. Texts are clear and edifying. They inform us about the Wallachian Basarab, voivode reigning in the land beyond the Carpathian Alps, was becoming unfaithful to the king of Hungary both in political and religious terms, presumably following the line of conduct of his father, identified by the name of Thocomerius. This implies that originally the Basarabs

[24] We don't discuss about the apocryphal character *Nicolai Basarab ot Vdi ot Bulgaria*, introduced in 1924 by Em. C. Grigoraş in his *Criptografia şi istoria românească (Cryptography and Romanian history)*, a patriotic attempt to move back in time Basarab's seniority to the XIIth century. Nor the heraldic lions placed in front of the Arsenal in Venice, and the 1241 mention of Persian chronicler Fazel Ullah-Rashid of *Bezerembam* of Ilaut Country.

were regarded as part of the Hungarian nomenklatura, that *Sancta Corona Regia* from above, or at least in a feudal association with the Hungarian throne[25]. By default, they were members of the occidental chivalry, who necessarily bore individualizing heraldic insignia.

Several theories about the origin of the Wallachian ruling family are conveyed. A serious researcher of early last century, Constantin Kogălniceanu, placed the Basarabs in Oltenia (Wallachia Minor), as descendants of *Lytvoy* and his brother *Barbath* of *terra Lytva*, maybe of *Seneslav* as well, all of them mentioned in Hungarian chancellery texts in 1247, 1279, 1285 and 1288[26]. Siding with Dimitrie Onciul, Ioan Chevalier of Puşcariu go further back in time in order to place the Basarab's ancestry in the Vlach-Bulgarian imperial family[27]. He got reasons. In 1188 Iohannitsa Asen Kaloyan escaped from Byzantine captivity and took refuge somewhere North, between Danube and Carpathians, *„becoming lord over some Vlachs of his kin"*[28]. He was recalled one year later to Tarnovo by his brother Asen. After Kaloyan's death, his nephew Alexander Asen had a longer contact with north-Danubian Vlachs, between 1207 and 1218. His sojourn with the people of Kaloyan left at least an onomastic trace in the pantheon of Basarab House, if not in its coat of arms too. Alexander moved on with his fate and apparently contracted later a matrimonial alliance within the Serbian dynasty of Nemanja[29], but in the light of his presence for over ten years north of Danube, the connection between Basarabs and Asenids is possible. It deserves a deeper investigation, for having, aside historical facts, heraldic arguments too.

Grigore Jitaru is proposing Basarab's lineage descent only from voivode Lytvoy, and he suggests his fellow historian to further investigate this interesting meridional origin. In his opinion, the master of *terra Lytva* could be the same with *Nicola Lyutovoi* of Melnik (the fortified city who belonged earlier to despot Alexis Slav), by default son or grandson of the Vlach despot, and descendent by female lineage from Tsar Iohannitsa Kaloyan himself. This Nicola/Nicholas, in a moment of weakness, is losing his fiefdom to the Nicæan emperor John III Doukas Vatzates sometime around year 1246 and *„took refuge to his kinsfolk North of Danube. Here he could become kenez, if we consider the Tatar-Mongolian bliz-*

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[25] Mihai-Florin Hasan proves this perception in his paper *„Aspects of the Hungarian-Wallachian matrimonial relations of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries"* (see www.academia.edu/4400008).

[26] Constantin Kogălniceanu, *Cercetări critice cu privire la istoria românilor. Basarab I zis Negru-Vodă, întemeietorul Ţărei Româneşti, (Critical research regarding Romanian history. Basarab I alias the Black Prince, founder of Wallachia)*, fascicule 1, Minerva Institute, Bucharest, 1908, pp.6-8.

[27] The polemic study intituled *Negru vodă (Black Prince)* was published by I. Puşcariu at Sibiu in 1898, as answer to B.P. Hasdeu criticism.

[28] Information given by Greek chronicler Niketas Choniates Akominatus in his capital work, *Historia*. Kaloyan remained linked to north-Danubian land by marrying, according to another Byzantine chronicler, Georgios Akropolites, with Anna, a *„Scythian"* lady (probably Cuman).

[29] According to genealogical site *www.gw.geneanet.org* (Gérard Mathout) and site *fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/Bulgaria*.

*zard who passed nearby six years ago and who could considerably drain the male sex"*[30]. Nicholas is a Basarab's voivodal name too, although used only once. Of course, one hypothesis doesn't remove completely the other. Many kinship ties occurred between Asen family and north-Danubian kenezes, such matrimonial alliances being in the sphere of normality. These ties strengthen generation after generation, inclusively when Theodora, Basarab's daughter, was given in marriage to John Alexander, the nephew of Tsar Michael Shishman.

O. Densusianu and N. Drăganu on other side suggest the Transylvanian origin of the dynasty, observing the persistence of the name *Lytvoy, Barbath, Tatomir* and *Basarab* in the area of Haţeg-Alba-Amlaş until the 14th century, and N. Stoicescu, S. Brezeanu and D. Căprăroiu place Thocomerius in Făgăraş Country, as voivode of Vlach-Petcheneg descent. A different vision have C. C. Giurescu, P. P. Panaitescu and I. Conea, who have their arguments supporting the localization of Basarab's homeland right where they established the princely residence, the Loviște-Argeş-Muscel area, superposed in general lines to the old Seneslav's land. Moreover, N. Iorga placed Basarab both in Argeş area and as Seneslav's scion[31].

Ignoring one moment historian's polemics linked to the racial and territorial origin, we join the thesis which states that Thocomerius, translated to Romanian as Tihomir or even better, Tatomir[32], is Negru Vodă (Black voivode) himself, Wallachia's mythical founder since year 1291, when he adopted *Radu* as voivodal name, and Basarab I is his son who confirmed his stature, by defeating the former Angevine suzerain in 1330. If Tihomir/Tatomir could be both a baptismal and a warrior's name, Basarab is not. It is definitely a *nom de guerre* composed of two themes, as in Byzantine and Slavic nobiliary tradition. Like Byzantine Emperor Basil II, nicknamed *Bulgaroktonos* (the Bulgars' killer), Bulgarian Tsar Samuel, surnamed *Kometopouli* (Count's scion), Iohannitsa Asen, who was *Kaloioannes* (Fair John), Constantine Asen, which as a boyar of Skopje was *Tikh* (the Quiet), or Nicola of Melnik, who was *Lyutvoi* (fierce warrior).

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[30] Grigore Jitaru, *Basarabii (The Basarabs)*, part I, in *Anuarul muzeului naţional de istorie al Moldovei (Yearly of the National history museum of Moldova)*, II, 1995. In our opinion, *Bate-arapi* is more likely the nickname of Lytvoy's brother, mentioned in a Hungarian document as *Barbath*. He is a more plausible participant to victorious fights against „Arabs" during Tatar-Mongol invasion from 1241-1242, for later to ally with them and attack together the Johannites Order in 1250. It must be investigated also the change by transliteration from *Barbath* to *Basarab*, which could explain the relationships between Lytvoy's and Tihomir/Tatomir families.

[31] Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria comerţului românesc – Epoca veche (History of Romanian trade – the Old Era*, vol. 1, Tiparul Românesc, Bucharest, 1925, p. 37.

[32] It seems clever but of common sense the clarification made by M. F. Hasan, who reads in the pre-Gothic script of the document „t" instead of „c", which gives *Thotomerius* instead of *Thocomerius*, so the Romanian *Tatomir*. This was a frequent 14th century Romanian name in Carpathian regions of Haţeg, Banat, Apuseni and Maramureş. See Mihai Florin Hasan, *Aspecte ale relaţiilor matrimonial dinastice munteano-maghiare din secolele XIV-XV (Aspects of Wallachian-Hungarian dynastic matrimonial relations in 14th-15th centuries)*, in *Revista Bistriţei (Bistritz Magazine), XXVII*, 2013, p.135, footnote 69. Same opinion was shared by father J. Karacsonyi, Catholic priest from Oradea, and historian Mary Holban.

Grigore Jitaru theorized a Romanian lexical provenance from *Bate-arapi* (beats Arabs)[33], consistent with B. P. Hasdeu hypothesis that *three moors' heads* coat of arms was belonging to Negru Vodă. Genealogist Octav Lecca embraced Hasdeu's idea, considering the Basarabs as descendants of a royal Dacian cast, the Sarabs, which gave even several Roman emperors, as Philip the Arab, Licinius, or Galerius. Seducing as it is, this idea appears to have no support. In truth, the long documentary night which wraps the genesis of the Romanian people allowed lot of such speculations without documentary backing. What we can say to date with a high degree of certitude is that beginning with Seneslav, Lytvoy, Barbath and later Basarab I, the first local rulers within „Cumania"[34] had for a long time good terms with the dominant force of the region, the Mongol warlord Isa Nogai (1262-1300), *the Khan's maker*[35]. He accepted the Romanian voivodes as tributary rulers on the river Olt's left bank and supported them against Hungarians at least in two occasions: in 1272 and 1277.

Most of historians agreed that Basarab is a name of Turkic origin composed by *Basar* (governor) or *Il-Basar* (vice-governor), and *Aba* (father). The Mongols used as *lingua franca* in conquered territories the Kipchak-Cuman dialect of Turkic tongue, which confirms that Iohannitsa was in close contact with Mongol warriors even before 1324, when he is first mentioned as such in a Hungarian chart. Later the Cuman admirative (or administrative?) nickname given by Mongol allies was transformed in frightening renown after 1343-1345 campaigns against the former brothers-in-arms waged in "Tatar's parts", the steppe area between inferior valleys of Prut and Dniester Rivers. This action led later to naming that land Bessarabia.

Radu Tatomir's son had a Christian name too, forgotten due to the prestige and unicity of his sobriquet. In 1349, a foreword to the first Serbian code of laws, the *Zakonic of Stephen Dušan*, mentioned him as *„Basarab Ivanko, father-in-law of Alexander* [the Tsar of Bulgaria]*"*. A discussion of this name is necessary. Ivanko is a diminutive for Ivan, but when this text was compiled Basarab was already an old man, passed through many wars and haloed by decisive victories against the neighbouring powers, so a warlike character uneasy to diminish by a chancery scribe. If they still did not name him Ivan, that means his was genuinely Ivanko, viz. Iohannitsa, with direct reference to the Vlach-Bulgarian Tsar from Asen House and his north-Danubian stage. We have no way of knowing if it is a baptismal name or assumed in adulthood, linked with his throne accession, an interesting custom of the dynasty that founded Wallachia.

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[33] Gr. Jitaru, *Basarabii (The Basarabs)*, part II, in *Anuarul muzeului naţional de istorie al Moldovei (Yearly of the National history museum of Moldova)*, II, 1995.

[34] Cumania was the Hungarian name for the Wallachian land lying towards East, beyond Olt River, as described in Diploma of 1274.

[35] The Mongol Horde of Nogai was based around 1290 on Danube right bank at Isaccea, in Northern Dobrudja.

The relatively few heraldic sources found so far that concern the Basarabs were described and discussed in detail by Romanian specialists beginning with the last century. Following representations became classic: (1) „headless knight", fresco from the first princely church at Curtea de Argeş, depicting in classical western style the blazoned shield at the voivode's feet (photo); (2) tunic's buttons found in tomb no. 10, in the princely necropolis from the same church; (3) arms engraved on coins minted by Vladislav I Vlaicu; (4) his successors' coats of arms until end of Basarab IV's reign, the last voivode who minted coins with the dynasty's heraldic symbol. Monetary issues of the House of Basarab cover a time span of some more than one hundred years, between 1365-1480. Otherwise, Romanian heraldry has a distinct sphragistical particularity, as heraldist Dan Cernovodeanu remarked[36].

*The headless knight, St. Nicholas church*

No definitive answer was given yet to the question regarding the Basarab arms origin. Which would be the moment of original embodiment we spoke about? The first option we discussed was the Asenid origin, which would place the first heraldic milestone sometime during the life of despot Alexis Slav, who as armiger preceded Alexander Asen with a decade (1208-1218). Nevertheless, the link between Wallachia and the striped Kaloyan arms appeared long after 1218, when a quite young Alexander not yet married within the House of Nemanja flew his Asen insignia as military leader (sebastokrator) of a region who included the Vlach people north of Vidin, but not much later than 1246, when a defeated Nicholas Lyutvoi left Melnik heading north for a change of luck. According to this hypothesis, when he was mentioned in Diploma of Johannites in 1247, *"Lytvoy woiavode"*, presumed forefather of Basarabs, was already armigerous, having as inspiration the Asenid coat of arms[37].

Aside from the Asenid hypothesis supported among others by I. Puşcariu and G. Jitaru, some Romanian heraldists beginning with Dan Cernovodeanu considered as natural the appearance of a conferred arms (or arms of patronage), as consequence of suzerain-vassal relation between Hungary and the young Wallachian state founded by Radu Tatomir. Yet no one has clearly stated whether he would be in this case the first armiger of his family. If so, should their emblem

[36] Dan Cernovodeanu, *Ştiinţa şi arta heraldică în România (Heraldic science and art in Romania)*, Bucharest, 1977, p. 40.

[37] Alexandru Madgearu has the same opinion, besides attributing to Lytvoy the coat of arms no. 1289 Wijnbergen, *„copied after those of this king"*, the despot of Vidin (in *Mongol domination and desprinderea românilor din Muntenia de sub dominaţia regelui Ungariei*, in *Revue of military history*, no. 12/2016, p. 5).

resemble with those of Charles Robert of Anjou, *barry of 8, silver and gules* (old Hungary)[38]*, dimidiated with azure semée-de-lys or* (old France), or not? Which part of the Angevine emblem would be his alleged arms of concession?

According to the heraldic concession hypothesis, the embodiment moment of the dynastic coat of arms should coincide with the recognition of the Basarabs' role as realm's frontier defenders, or at least for constant loyalty towards the suzerain. We know, this was not the case. Founding of a centralized Wallachian state is consequence of the very fight for detachment from vassalage bonds with a kingdom mined by centrifugal movements after the extinction of Arpad dynasty. This fight was started earlier by Lytvoy in 1272. So, the idea of conferred arms is denied by historical facts. Even a Romanian heraldic authority as Tudor-Radu Tiron is rejecting the arms of concession theory based on lack of documentary proof, so *„we can only notice the influences; however, we have no reasons to think about any awards of armorial diplomas"*[39]. Obviously, the observed influence is referring to shield partition and its diminutives.

The national collective memory preserved to date the foundation myth of the ruling Basarab House, true, without the heraldic part. Perhaps it was not the case, their subjects' interest for heraldic symbols being scanty, and the Basarabs being not quite occidental knights. They were an ancient and powerful family of north-Danubian noblemen, existing probably since the Byzantine then the Vlach-Bulgarian Empires prevailed between Danube and Carpathians. However, their founding myth appears late and is related to the installation at the head of the new state. We are speaking of Negru Vodă's „Dismount" from Făgăraş. He, *„great duke of Almaş and Făgăraş"*, *„got up of there with all his house and with plenty of people: Romanians, Papists, Saxons, all kind of people, and descending on the water of Dâmboviţa began to build a new country"* (Cantacuzene Chronicle). Historians debated long about the moment of this cardinal event. Apparently, it's year 1291. Probably at the same time with religious consecration as great voivode, he assumed the name *Radu* (Slavonic for *joyful, happy*), not using anymore the old Tatomir and allowing his entry into the legend as Radu Negru. As for heraldic symbols displayed as dynasty founder, we join those who believe the existence of a family coat of arms few generations before the formation of the north-Danubian state, originating from the imperial Asenid arms and comporting a first form of cadency: decreasing the number of honourable pieces (bars) from ten to eight.

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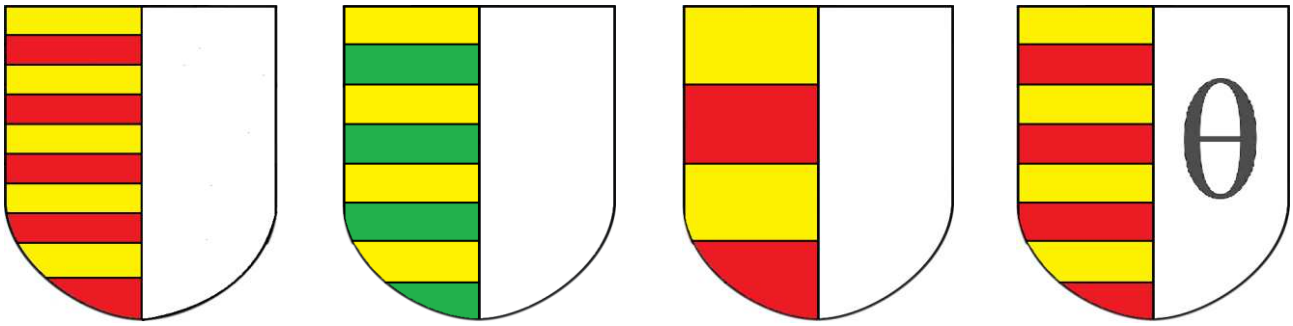
[38] Argent-gules and not gules-argent seems to be the order of tinctures on the old Arpad House, succession preferred by the last two Arpadian kings and maintained by the kings of Anjou House.

[39] Tudor-Radu Tiron, *At the border of two worlds. Hungarian and Polish Influences upon the Wallachian and Moldavian Mediaeval Heraldry (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries)* in *Genealogica & Heraldica. Proceedings of the XXXth International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences, held at Maastricht, 24-28 September 2012*, s'Gravenhage, Stichting De Nederlandse Leeuw, 2014, p. 349.

Once with the Diploma offered to the Order of Johannites, and the implied recognition of a Wallachian "mark" (*terra Lytva*) tied politically to the kingdom of Bela IV even before the mid-13th century, it is natural to contemplate the idea of a heraldic influence coming from Hungary. Whatever this influence, it involves in our opinion only actions of altering a pre-existing, Asen-Shishman type coat of arms. We speak about following possibilities: shield impalement by dimidiation, tincture changing, variation of diminutives' number, and charges addition.



*Dimidiation* *Tincture changing* *Variation of diminutive* *Heraldic charges addition*

Heraldically speaking, dimidiation (marshalling) was already in the 1200's (under French influence) the augmentation of choice for "advertising" an acquisition of a new province, either by conquest or by matrimonial alliances. Based on European synchronism, we think that this heraldic principle was applied also by Danubian dynasts.

First opportunity for arms marshalling arises in time of Lytvoy. He could either directly take over the blazon of the ancestor Alexis Slav or advertise his dominion over the Seneslav's voivodship, happened sometime between 1272 and 1279[40]. A charter of king Ladislaus the Cuman from 1285 tells how the Hungarian suzerain reacted forcefully to this feat, Lytvoy was killed in battle with *magister Georgius Baksa*, and his brother Barbath was captured, but ransomed later by family. Another opportunity came in 1324, when Iohannitsa Basarab acquired combating Ban Paul's garrison the fortress and the Banate of Severin. They were still Wallachian in year 1329, when Daniel Szécsy, the nominal Ban of Severin, was guarding the border against Basarab from his stronghold of Mehadia, 50 km north-west from Severin. From heraldic perspective, if we consider Oltenia, *Walachia minor* in Schrot's armorial, as the territorial successor to the Banate of Severin, we can interpret the silver shield introduced there as background for the red lion as inherited from the old Hungarian Banate, and the senester field of the Basarab's dimidiated shield could be after this conquest *argent*.

[40] In that year ended the 25 years interval in which the Knights Johannites had *„half of the income and benefits"* of the tribute provided by Seneslav to the Hungarian throne and exclusivity of the one owed by Cumania, basically a supplement taken probably again from Seneslav, for Johannites have not ever been able to control the true masters of Cumania, the Mongols. It seems that Lytvoy took advantage of the moment to retrieve these important benefits, making then a first liberation attempt from the Hungarian vassalage.

One possible heraldic hypothesis deserves a separate note, not being related to a pre-existent coat of arms augmentation. This is the arms assumption of an opponent defeated in battle, chivalrous feat of great prestige in the middle Ages. The opportunity to acquire a brand-new coat of arms presented itself for a second time to Basarab I in 1330. During the four-day slaughter (9-12 November), king Charles Robert saved his life by changing outfit with one of his retainers. This one was killed, and the Romanians took possession of an excellent war trophy: the king's blazoned war equipment. Information about the painful loss is offered by *„Chronicum pictum Vindobonenses"* (Illuminated Chronicle of Vienna, c. 1360)[41].

Being aware of the symbolic importance of such action, especially for a martial and arrogant knight as the king was, it is likely that Basarab I displayed since then the armoured outfit bearing Hungary-Anjou arms as his own. The more so as this was an undeniable right according to knightly custom in medieval Europe. Kaloyan did the same after defeating the Latin Empire. It is true, the practice was to capture the defeated, as the victor was entitled to wear his insignia only until the loser was ransomed by his kin. But if he would never be ransomed, but ran instead, abandoning his knightly symbols? It would not be rightful for the winner to bear for good that splendid manufactured arms?

Small changes would be made, however, especially considering a combat buckler hardly hit and scratched by adverse weapons filled with hatred. For example, if the field with stripes would be refurbished because reminded the old Asenid arms, the golden lilies of France would be removed or covered, leaving only the tincture *azure*, coincidentally the same with an equal potential familiar colour, the despot's one. Although a question remains: why replacing a heraldic superior metal (golden stripes on the Asenid shield) with an inferior one (silver stripes on the Arpadian one)? We receive a competent answer from Thomas Robson's "*British Herald*", who is reminding that *"acquiring of coat armour by such feats of valour was considered more honourable than hereditary bearings, which descend alike to the cowardly and the brave"*[42].

Apparently without heraldic meaning, we see how by chivalry rules it is possible for a heraldic diminution to turn in a solid augmentation. The result will meet the conviction expressed by numismatist Octavian Iliescu and supported by

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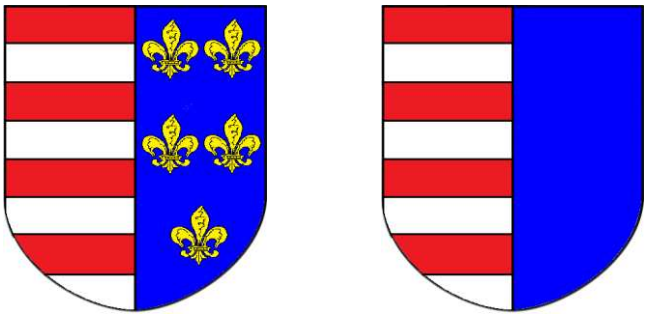
[41] Tudor-Radu Tiron, *ibid*. underlines in p. 346: *„Seeing the disaster of his army, the monarch changed his blazoned armour with one of his magnates, who lost his life to insure the retreat of his sovereign" („Rex autem mutauerat **armorum suorum insignia** quibus induerat Deseu filium Dyonisii, quem putantes esse regem crudeliter occiderunt")".*

[42] Thomas Robson, *The British Herald*, vol. III, Harvard College Library, 1917, page X: *„In the days of chivalry, it was considered lawful that the victor, upon making captive any gentleman or warrior of higher degree, might assume and bear the shield of arms of his prisoner, enjoying it till regained by the vanquished; and the acquiring of coat armour by such feats of valour was considered more honourable than hereditary bearings, which descend alike to the cowardly and the brave."*

heraldist Dan Cernovodeanu[43], about the existence to the princely Court of Argeş of a coat of arms resembling to the Anjou-Hungary one. But the meaning of this presence and the reason of this *sui-generis* heraldic augmentation are signify-cantly different than just a trivial concession of arms. We believe that Iohannitsa Basarab wore Carol Robert's colors as personal arms of prestige until his death, but not replacing the family coat of arms, as we will see further.



*The Angevin shield and the possible alteration made by Basarab I on his war trophy*

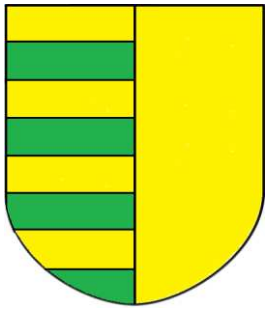
In 1920, under the leadership of Virgil Drăghiceanu a series of archaeo-logical excavations were carried out in the princely necropolis of the church St. Nicholas in Curtea de Argeş, church named by Romanian historians Argeş II. It was erected over an older basilica, Argeş I, also called *Seneslav's chapel*. The necropolis includes 14 main tombs placed in the nave and 7 more in the narthex. Of the 14, only 8 still contained human remains: 4 are anonymous warriors, 3 were assigned to some voivodal figures, and the last is voivodes' kinsman, Nan Dobă. The most important discovery was made in the tomb no. 10, where it was unveiled the body of a man lavishly dressed in a burgundy tunic with at least 50 silver gilded buttons, a princely tiara, a golden buckle with a workmanship of great beauty, and four golden rings, each having gemstone mounts and engra-vings of biblical texts. The buttons presented heraldic interest, being blazoned as *French shield barry of eight, or and sinople, dimidiated with plain, or*. Soon after this momentous discovery, two different heraldic interpretations occurred, due to divergent views regarding the buttons' true colours.

The first, backed by G. Brătianu, O. Iliescu and D. Cernovodeanu, argued as obvious the gold-green coloristic binomial. They asserted that the heraldic gold replaced the Angevine overlord's silver as new assumed arms subsequent to victory from 1330. Moreover, it is considered certain the gold and sinople combination for the next Basarab's generations, appealing to an early 1500's coat of arms depicted for Stephen the Great of Moldavia. This per-fess-and-per-pale shield presents in the third quarter *sinople, two fesses or*, seen as heraldic proof for the matrimonial alliances between Basarab dynasty and Moldavian House of

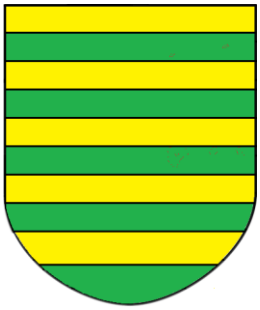
[43] Dan Cernovodeanu, *Ştiinţa şi arta heraldică în România (Heraldic science and art in Romania)*, Ed. Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, p. 67.

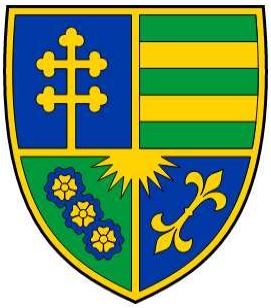
Bogdan. To this interpretation was hastily added the identification of the buried character with Iohannitsa Basarab I himself.

*Blazoned button in tomb no. 10*



*Shishman Imperial House*





*Arms of Stephen the Great*

Second interpretation, supported by Jean-Nicholas Mănescu and András Veress, choose to not absolutize the colours of a coat of arms born as simple adornment on a buttoned suit and stated that, just like the emblems engraved on coins, the colours are inconclusive. More so, the gold enamel decreed by the first theory is quite pale. In the third decade of the last century, between Brătianu and Veress was developed a fierce academical controversy, in which both directions were debated[44].

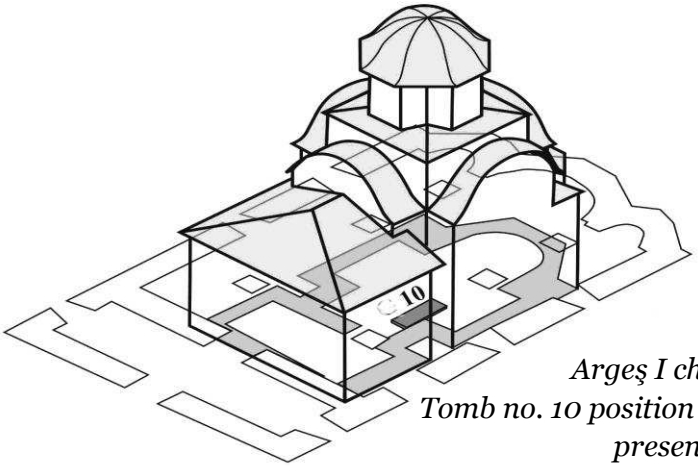
The first theory suffers from the haste to publish new historical data interpreted in a moment of patriotic emotion. The interpretation we gave to the heraldic aftermath of the „four-days battle"[45] is more plausible and, as we shall see below, it is supported by the newest research at Curtea de Argeş. More balanced would be to admit the existence of this gold-sinople arms within Basarab family yet before the victory over king Charles Robert, as heraldic augmentation coming from House of Shishman and occasioned by an alliance of blood. This emblem could coexist at a certain historical moment with the Angevin shield mastered as personal insignia by Iohannitsa in remembrance of a crucial moment in his political life. The alliance of blood we are speaking of was his daughter's marriage with Tsar Michael III nephew, likely to occur around 1323-24, before Wallachian voivode's troops contribute to the successful Bulgarian campaign to pacify the Kran area.

Likewise, the second theory appears to be rather excessive, dismissing too quickly the coloristic evidence of the heraldic discovery from 1920. The Hungarian-born historian stakes were in 1930's rather revanchist-chauvinistic: emphasis the Wallachian vassalage position to Hungary by proving the existence of arms of concession with Angevine colours. Ironically, Veress had probably right about an Angevine shield displayed at the Wallachian court. But it can't be

[44] G. Brătianu, *Originea stemelor Moldovei şi Ţării Româneşti (Origin of Moldavian and Wallachian emblems)*, in Revista istorică română... (Romanian Historical Magazine), 1931, pag.50-61.

[45] We use this syntagma instead of classical „battle of Posada", because this toponymic non-existent in the historical sources was introduced in Romanian historiography by N. Iorga as simple metaphor.

assigned to the deceased from tomb no. 10. It belonged to Iohannitsa Basarab, which is not buried there, but at Câmpulung, and not as symbol of feudal submission, but *per contra*, as proof of victory over the former suzerain and country's emancipation by sword.




*Argeş I church planimetry and Argeş II footprint.*
*Tomb no. 10 position in relation to both (drawing from GENESIS project presentation at Romanian Academy, 2014)*

Recent research on the remains from Curtea de Argeş tomb no. 10 was conducted within GENESIS project[46], meant to bring a glimpse of light in the genealogy of the Wallachian rulers.

The buried character was classified within a haplogroup on the matrilineal ancestry by studying bones' DNA, but the answer could not be complete due to the lack of comparability with other genetic material within Basarab dynasty. Specialists reported the isolation of a mitochondrial mutation specific to Caucasian race, frequently met in Germanic countries, but similar with one specific to the Indian subcontinent. Then, they dated the approximate age of the defunct using radioactive C14 method. This yielded some answers.

Alexandru Simon, researcher within the project, stated that *„now we can say with 90% probability that the one who is buried at Curtea de Argeş is neither Vladislav Vlaicu nor Radu I. By radiocarbon dating we obtained bones age year 1340 +/- 30 the error margin"*[47]. Later, information was contextualized and was determined that *„the deceased had died shortly before the erecting of Argeş II church [...]. He was buried in Argeş I church which date back to 1230-1260 and is most probable* ***one of the unnamed sons of Basarab I****, mentioned in a document of 1335"*[48]. What interests us is that GENESIS project failed to give

[46] GENESIS, acronym for „Genetic Evolution: New Evidences for the Study of Interconnected Structures": interdisciplinary project conducted between 2013-2015, a partnership including the National Institute of Biology (Romanian Academy Branch) Bucharest, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj, Al. I. Cuza University Iaşi, project coordinator acad. Octavian Popescu, researchers Beatrice Kelemen, Adrian Ioniţă, Alexandru Simon.

[47] The same Alexandru Simon, interview taken by Eliza Almasi and published on 23rd September 2013 in Ziar de Cluj Journal of Cluj), entitled *Proiectul Genesis schimbă istoria (Genesis Project is changing history)*.

[48] Statement by Alexandru Simon at the conference held at Romanian Academy and cited by Florina Pop in the article *Prinţul Negru al Ţării Româneşti. Cercetătorii din Cluj, Iaşi şi Bucureşti dezleagă misterul unui voievod îngropat la Curtea de Argeş (Black Prince of Wallachia. Researchers from Cluj, Iaşi and Bucharest unveil the mistery of a voivode buried at Curtea de Argeş)*, in *Adevărul* newspaper, on-line edition from 4 November 2014.

clear verdicts, but only sketched some clues. Overall conclusion outlines the physical appearance of the deceased from tomb 10: a figure of 1.70 m (5 ft 7 in) tall, athletic, with long black hair, brown eyes and dark complexity, of Germanic or North-Indian maternal descent and deceased aged approximately 40. The death took place sometime in the time frame **1310-1370**. What could not be decisively clarified is whether he was member of the Basarab dynasty or not.

Interpreting the initials engraved on his cameo ring (AL MA), researchers have surmised that it is an engagement ring between one Alexander and one Mary. The only Alexander from that time rests in Câmpulung, along his Lady Clara. Reinterpreting the third engraved letter as V or W instead of M, for GENESIS researchers more plausible seemed the legend *AL[exander] VA[ivoda]*, title attributed in the Romanian Middle Ages to all male offspring of a ruler. We learned recently that under print is a work of C. Bîrsan tackling this subject. He is contributing with a new hypothesis on AL VA text, read together as participle of Hungarian verb „to sleep”[49].

*AL VA rebus on the princely ring*

Not trying a critical interpretation of the engraved letters, let’s agree: we have there a rebus composed of two letters, A and L, from his probable name. If it is about another ALexander, an ALbu, ALdea or ALbert (names from Basarab and Lackfi onomastic pantheon), it is hard to say. What we know for certain, because his right to be buried in the voivodal resting place of Argeş and the blazoned buttons on the funeral tunic, he was related to Iohannitsa Basarab I. Lacking for now other historical sources, genetics is unfortunately not enough supported by an elliptical inscription on a ring[50].

We try to interpolate the GENESIS data with historical and archaeological information to date. The radiocarbon analysis gives us the more than generous range 1310-1370, when the House of Basarab was represented in turn by Tatomir Radu/Negru Vodă (deceased around 1315), Iohannitsa Basarab I (d. 1352), a number of his sons of which we only know Nicholas Alexander (d. 1364), then the latter's sons: Voislav (d. 1366), Vladislav I and Radu I (both dead after 1370).

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[49] The hypothesis is published on the webpage *istorieveche.ro/2016/08/20/inelul-cu-camee-al-lui-negru-voda*.

[50] Dr. N. Constantinescu ruins most of the conclusions of the GENESIS project in his paper *Court of Argeş in the past and today: international scientific interest vs. confusion and native imposture* publish in *Argesis Magazine. Studii şi comunicări. Seria istorie, Tom XXIV,* Ed. Ordessos, Piteşti 2015, p. 9-45. He criticize the documentation, the report’s illustration and the inventory interpretation, especially the AL/VA ring, to which he thinks it possible originate in a capture of weapons, money and jewels from the 4 days battle of 1330. Constantinescu believ that *„he belonged to a clergyman, a Catholic hierarch"*.

Of these all, it is known that Basarab I and Alexander are buried in the princely necropolis of Câmpulung. Uncertainty hovers over the final resting place of Negru Vodă. Genetically, the sobriquet *Negru* would be confirmed by the dark complexity and black hair of the defunct, but this appearance could belong to more family members.

Besides him, from the possible relatives remained one of the Basarab I completely unknown sons, and three of Nicholas Alexander's offspring: Voislav (another discrete historical figure of which aside a rough year of death nothing is known), Vladislav and Radu. Reading a gravestone inscription, historians assigned to Voislav and Vladislav other tombs than the one in question.

The first and oldest voivodal name mentioned in Argeş monastery Diptych is Radu. On these grounds C. Giurescu assumed that in tomb no. 10 are the remains of Radu I (1372-1385), nephew of Basarab I. The careful concealment, the rich garments, outstanding jewellery and the centre-right position in the nave indicates the importance given to the character, and Radu I would be without discussion a voivode worthily of the inventory discovered. This assumption was nevertheless dismissed by A. Sacerdoţeanu on the grounds of timeline of tomb occupancy. Systematic archaeological excavations showed that tomb no. 10 was dug deep, the sarcophagus stone cover lying under church Argeş I (Seneslav chapel) pavement, was sealed by 25 cm thick boulders and rubble from Argeş I, then completely covered with church Argeş II pavement. Shutter's characteristics seem to question both the burial in the old church (one of Alexandru Simon's conclusions) and the lower interval of C14 dating, 1310-1350.

Another element to consider is the jewellery inventory's timing. According to the conclusions of G. Schönpflug von Gamsenberg published by Ovidiu Pecican[51], the golden buckle shaped as a stylized fortress was worked by a member of Sibiu goldsmith's guild and bestowed by sovereigns Louis and Elizabeth of Hungary, portrayed on buckle's sides. This gift would occur obviously after the marriage of the royal couple (1353).

*The buckler from tomb no. 10, St. Nicholas princely church, Curtea de Argeş*

[51] În Ovidiu Pecican's Blog – Imago Mundi & Speculum Historiae, *Din nou despre paftaua de la Argeş (Again about the buckle of Argeş)*, May 19, 2010, on-line on ovidiupecican.wordpress.com.

Knowing this and overlapping it over the timeframe set by C14 method, results that death occurred sometime between 1353 and 1370. The time frame excludes for good voivode Radu I. Again, until about 1364 (1361 according to Cornel Bîrsan) in this necropolis could not take place any burial, the church being in process of rebuilding. If anyone died then, he would have been buried in Câmpulung, as happened with Basarab I and Nicholas Alexander, both voivodes dead before the new church work completion. The only plausible range remains **1364-1370**, when at Argeş II the construction was finished and were conducted the interior wall paintings. A man aged about 40, dead in the 7th decade, buried with valuable gifts received from the Hungary's kings could not be young Voislav, rather **one of those unnamed sons of Iohannitsa Basarab I** implied in that text from the Angevine document: *„Bazarab Olacus et filii eius"*. He must have been customary sent as hostage to the Angevin Court to mark the reconciliation between the two dynasties. This relations improvement was negotiated by Nicholas Alexander and king Louis early in the latter's reign (1343 or 1344). Prince AL VA (Aldea Voivode?) must be returned home after his father's death (1352), when Nicholas Alexander loyalty had been proved in at least two anti-Tatar joint campaigns and a Hungarian marriage with Maria Lackfi, thus the presence of a hostage seemed no longer necessary.

Judging things from another angle, the careful concealing of the grave allows a second hypothesis. Maybe tomb no. 10 is not sheltering a direct descendant of Basarab House, but an in-law about whose death on Wallachian territory was inconvenient, even an imminent political danger to the dynasty if his resting place would go public. He could be either a catholic nobleman disgraced by the Hungarian king who took refuge to his relatives or one deceased suddenly in Wallachia.

On Wallachian territory died in combat Transylvanian voivode Nicholas Lackfi (1368), but John of Küküllö wrote in his *"Chronicle of Hungarians"* that his body was repatriated by the defeated. Hungarian tradition says that he is resting at Esztergom. Also, his brother and predecessor, Andrew Lackfi (initials consistent with the first part of the ring rebus, A L), may die here on other occasion. He issued his last document at Alba Iulia or Visegrád (Weissenburg, Wyssegrad) in 1359 and then disappears from archives and his tomb's location is unknown. As voivode of Transylvania, he could receive valuable royal gifts and he was related to Wallachian ruling dynasty, as brother of Lady Mary, Nicholas Alexander's wife. He had Germanic ancestry as scion of *Lack de genere Herman*. All these are supported by genetic arguments and jewellery inventory, with the notable exception of the tunic's blazoned buttons.

In conclusion, for these archaeological, historical, genetical and logical reasons available to date, the best chances to rest in tomb no. 10 are with the unknown AL VA son of Iohannitsa Basarab, dispatched to the royal court in Buda for at least eight years (1344-1352) and dead in unknown circumstances sometime between 1364-1370, during Vladislav I Vlaicu's reign. Was the uncle a potential throne rival removed by his nephew? It could be a valid reason for the careful dissimulation of the tomb.

About the striped or-sinople arms, in Pecican's view, *"the emblem of Argeş follows the dimidiation and, at least partially, the field colors and the recurse to horizontal bends after House of Anjou's pattern. This fact makes me believe that it belonged to an aristocrat vassal of Hungarian dynasts, being more likely a vassal of Louis (1342-1382)"*[52]. In our opinion, it's origin can be traced as heraldic augmentation from a coat of arms born south of Danube in the Shishman Imperial House. The armiger buried in tomb no. 10 at Curtea de Argeş inherited within his family the dexter field from the Shishmanid and the marshalling from an ancestor who justified the heraldic cadency by getting the Balkanic title of despot, by territorial annexation or by marriage. Also, is logic to admit that, when staying around King Louis as guarantor of his older brother's loyalty, our hypothetical Aldea[53] have become king's vassal according to the chivalresque practice, but insufficient to retrieve also his coat of arms. As about his belonging to the Catholic rite, tomb's dissimulation make us believe that it is a plausible assumption.

To date, the coat of arms depicted on "headless knight" fresco, unfortunately completely illegible now due to repeated vandalization, was considered the oldest heraldic symbol of the Basarabs, dated sometimes around year 1320. O. Iliescu believed in 1977 that he can detect a dimidiated shield, with the first quarter barry of eight pieces. After C14 dating last year, the emblem on the buttons from tomb no. 10 is the second oldest form of Basarab dynastic arms, emerging only few years before first blazoned coins of Vladislav I Vlaicu.

[52] În Ovidiu Pecican's Blog – Imago Mundi & Speculum Historiae, *Paftaua de la Argeş: cca. 1350-1400 (The buckle of Argeş: around 1350-1400)*, March 23, 2010, on-line on ovidiupecican.wordpress.com.

[53] Or Alexander, according to the paper of Ad. Ioniţă, B. Kelemen and Al. Simon, *Between Negru-Vodă and the Black Prince of Wallachia. Grave 10 in St Nicholas princely church of Curtea de Argeş* in Yearbook of the »A. D. Xenopol« Institute of History, Iaşi, no. 51/2014.

# 4. Coins minted by Vladislav I Vlaicu. Comments on issues' succession

Due to the inevitable monochromatic of the coins minted by **Vladislav I Vlaicu (1364-1377)** in Wallachia, a question mark remains regarding the emblem's real colors.

According to medieval custom, coin's obverse is usually engraved with the arms of issuing authority, and the reverse with an image of this authority (a Christian symbol, patron Saint, effigy of the political leader, etc.). For example, the king Louis the Great (1342-1382) of Hungary, a long-lived ruler contemporary with no less than four voivodes of Wallachia (and their overlord for the most of this interval), minted gold ducats having the Anjou-Hungary arms on the obverse, and the image of Saint-king Ladislaus on the reverse.

*Ducat bearing Anjou-Hungary emblem issued by Louis I the Great (1342-1382)*

In a time of Byzantine monetary system's decline, it was expected for the Hungarian ducat to be the pattern for the Wallachian ducat initiated, as historical evidence to date suggests, by Vladislav I Vlaicu. Having no access by political reasons to the Transylvanian gold, he resorted to imported silver from Bulgaria (with bismuth traces) and Serbia[54]. He assumed implicitly a weighing system spread around the Balkan region, one silver mark of 210 g being divided into 200 *ducats* of 1.05 g, or 300 *deniers* of 0.70 g, or 600 *bani* of 0.35 g. Vlaicu's silver ducats were at parity with Bulgarian, Serbian and Bohemian *grossi*, but also with Byzantines *stavraton*, all emulating the 13th century *Venetian ducats*.

On the other hand, as specialists noted, his monetary subdivisions, denier and ban, *"closely follows the model of denier and obol minted by the royal mints in Hungary"*[55]. This double influence illustrates at numismatic level the narrow manoeuvre space available to the young Wallachian state ruler in the regional

[54] Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Katiuşa Pârvan, Bogdan Constantinescu, G. Niculescu and Migdonia Georgescu, *The early stage of the Wallachian coinage (c.1365-1386) in the light of atomic analyses*, on-line paper on www.romarcheomet.ro.

[55] George Buzdugan, Octavian Luchian, Constantin Oprescu, *Monede şi bancnote româneşti (Romanian coins and banknotes)*, Sport-Turism Publishing House, Bucharest 1977, pg. XVI. Recently, in the paper named above, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu announced his researches' conclusion: *„in spite of commonly-held view, the early Wallachian monetary system did not consisted of three denominations: the ducat, denier and ban (pl. bani), but only of two; namely the ducat and the ban. In fact, the so-called deniers were only light-weight, debased ducats, struck after the monetary reform undertaken during the mid-1370's."*

geopolitics. It must be said that an even narrow course had the voivodes of Moldavia, who took the entire Angevine arms on the reverse, assumed as superior authority. Gross-type coins minted in Moldavia by Peter II Muşat (c.1375-c.1391) displayed an identical coat of arms to the Louis the Great ducat.

### 4.1. Link between crucial political events and monetary issues

Considering his reign duration of about 13-14 years, Vlaicu conducted a remarkable rich monetary activity. Numismatists have tried to put order in the multitude of monetary issues of ducats, deniers and ban's having various design and legend, ordering by numbers a succession of types and variants (i.e. only from his *deniers'* issues reached us no less than 21 variants). A true numismatic Bible, centralizing information and clarifying the historical discoveries, is the work *"Monede şi bancnote româneşti"* (*Romanian coins and bank notes*), published in 1977 by Buzdugan, Luchian and Oprescu (MBR – acronym used further in this study). They offer also, in addition to basic information on coins minted by Romanian rulers, a chronology of these issues. All types of coins are numbered by Latin numerals, without explaining the reason behind issues' chronology.

No doubt, a careful analysis of the reigns of currency minting rulers, in the light of latest information and carried out by interdisciplinary work will lead to revaluation of chronology hence the numbering proposed by the work published 40 years ago. Here we offer some food for thought for this purpose, following the heraldic path. As working hypothesis, we exclude the existence of a large number of mints striking on coins distinctive graphic signs (trademarks), as usual in the medieval West. Wallachia or Rumanian Country was born in the late 1200's having a single centre of power, and we have no evidence about the simultaneous existence of several mints. So, we start with the idea that the first currency issuer established and used only one mint, the princely one from Curtea de Argeş.[56] It is also highly unlikely for a possible mint mark to appear on the voivode's personal arms shown on the coins' obverse. This would have been a lack of reverence unthinkable in the feudal era. Common practice so required that any trademark would appear outside the heraldic shield.

During his reign, Vladislav I Vlaicu has undergone several different political stages, very likely reflected symbolically on his monetary issues. We will review these stages briefly, highlighting historical moments which favoured currency production:

- **1364-1367**, years of consolidating power. According to historical records, the young principality is not yet independent, having a double vassalage, both by tradition: with Hungary (king Louis the Great) and with Bulgaria (Vlaicu's

[56] Opinion of Octavian Iliescu stated in *op.cit.* page 85, with which we concur.

uncle, John Alexander)[57]. Circulating coins in Wallachia were the Byzantine golden *hyperpyra* and the Bulgarian silver *grossi*.

- Vlaicu omits to swear fealty to the king Louis the Great when acceding to the throne, and the latter declared him in the 1365 military conscription (January 5th) as *usurper*[58];
- (1365) he refuses to take part to the successful Hungarian campaign against Badin, who created a Hungarian Banate, military buffer-mark south of Danube; financial blockage caused by severed links with the allied Badin, likely countered by probable occupation of the Banate of Severin and establishing the first national mint in Wallachia[59]; **Opportunity/necessity to issue currency**
- (1366) indications of more settled relations with king Louis[60]: Vlaicu is approving a boundary between Transylvania and Wallachia; (autumn) king Louis asks for a delimitation between some Transylvanian fiefdoms including *„parte terrarum sub vaivodatu domini Ladislai vaivodae nostri Transalpini"*, i.e. Amlas area; the context shows that Banate of Severin was not under Hungarian rule.

- **1368**, trade privilege given to Braşov merchants (January 20th) and king Louis the Great contesting Wallachian possession of Severin.
- a double attack: an army towards Severin and another from Transylvania towards Târgovişte; both are successfully rejected, in one fight being killed even the attacker's commander, the voivode of Transylvania Nicholas Lackfi (Vlaicu's cousin);
- diplomatic activity directed towards Byzantium: plea for a military alliance and request for setting up of a second Wallachian Metropolitan see in Severin;
- boosted by Tsar of Târnovo, Vlaicu's campaign drove out of Badin Ban Denis Lackfi. **Opportunity/necessity to issue currency.**

- **1369**, Vlaicu issues **Bulgarian *grossi* countermarked with Basarab arms,** presumably to pay his army. The silver is coming from Târnovo treasury, as compensation for his intervention (around 900,000 silver grossi).

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[57] Some relatives and in-laws of Vladislav I lived South of Danube: John Alexander was married with Vladislav's aunt, Theodora, and he was the big brother of John Sracimir, Tsar of Badin, this one in turn married with Ana, voivode's sister.

[58] Mihai Florin Hasan, *op. cit.*, page 133. The question is, he was usurper of voivode Radu, his future co-ruler and successor, or usurper of a general principle of suzerain's feudal right? According to medieval thought, the latter version is more plausible.

[59] Octavian Iliescu, *1365-1965: şase veacuri de la emiterea celei dintâi monede româneşti (1365-1965: six centuries since issuing the first Romanian coinage*, in *Buletinul Societăţii Numismatice Române* 96-120 (1948-1972), page 84.

[60] Mihai Florin Hasan, *op. cit.*, page 133.

- donation for Cutlumus Orthodox monastery (Mt. Athos), *„to make by this charity for my parents and for myself, now and in times to come, glory in present life and sins forgiveness in the next life”*, true profession of faith;
- obtaining from king Louis the release of Tsar John Sratsimir and his sister, abolition of Hungarian administrative structure, the Banate of Bulgaria, replaced with suzerainty; part of the agreement, Vlaicu recognizes king's liege in exchange of Făgăraş, the old family fiefdom; he styles himself *„by the grace of God and the king of Hungary, prince of Wallachia and duke of Făgăraş”*;
- repelling of the first ever Turkish incursion north of Danube, he goes with Hungarians in campaign against the Tsar of Târnovo, ally of the Turks; he occupies Dristra/Silistra;
- allowing the appointment of a Catholic bishop and the construction of two Catholic churches in Wallachia, one in Curtea de Argeş and another in Târgovişte.

- **1370**, the decisive year for the confessional path of Wallachia. Ecumenical Patriarch Callixtus I responds favourable to Vlaicu's requests for 2 years ago.
- Vlaicu refuses Pope proposal to convert/return to Catholicism;
- Wallachia get recognition from Byzantine Emperor John V Palaiologos, who needed allies against the Turks.
- the Metropolitan See of Severin is established by appointment of hierarch Antim (lay name: Daniel Critopol); monk Nicodemus begins his monastical work at Voditsa and Tismana in Oltenia;

**Opportunity to issue currency stating the country's new ecclesiastical arrangement (ducats, arms barry of 4 with crescent senester-type I).**

- **1371**, the stature of Orthodox Wallachia is becoming determinant in the Balkan area by inheriting the position of Byzantine and Bulgarian empires. Ottoman danger reaches the Danube line.
- dies the former suzerain, John Alexander of Târnovo, and Bulgaria is occupied by the Turks; Wallachian garrison are preserving the independence of "Badin oblast";
- Wallachian troops are taking part in the battle of Cernomen (Maritsa River), lost by Serbians and Byzantines; Macedonia and Greece falls under Ottoman occupation.

**Opportunity to issue Byzantine style currency (ducats, cross cantoned by 4 stars-type II).**

- **1372**, around this year Vlaicu associates Radu I as co-ruler on the throne.
- dies Hyacinth, Metropolitan of Argeş and Wallachia; promptly, Patriarch Philoteos of Constantinople appoints abbot Hariton of Cutlumus as successor;
- Vlaicu styles himself *„baron of Făgăraş and Amlas”* in a local donation letter;

**Opportunity for combined currency issue [i.e. anepigraphic ban with barry of 4 on obverse, cross cantoned by 2 stars and the monograms V (Vladislav) and R (Radu) on reverse].**

- **1373-1375**, consequences of all the manifestation of independence. King Louis bans the salt import from Wallachia, embargo affecting the country's treasury. In turn, Pope Gregory XI asks bishops of Hungary and Transylvania to curse *"all inhabitants who will sell weapons to Romanians and Turks"*.
- (1374) Vlaicu makes donations in villages and money to Voditsa Orthodox monastery near Severin, where Nicolae Iorga suggests that he would be also buried[61];
- (1375) Severin is attacked by Hungarians; the fortress itself is lost, but not the related hinterland.
- **1376-1377**, Severin is reconquered; sometimes between 1374 and 1377 Vlaicu dies and Radu I remain sole *„great voivode and prince"*.

We notice at least five cardinal moments during Vlaicu's reign in which he could mint coins, of economic necessity or as reminder of his politico-military activity. At least about one we know for certain: marking of Bulgarian *grossi* must have taking place after Vidin's conquest in 1368. As for the moment of first monetary issue, they can be only two:

1) the second half of 1365, time advanced by Octavian Iliescu, in the context of financial deadlock triggered by the Bulgarian currency influx cessation as result of Hungarian conquest of Badin, or
2) the winter 1367-68, preparing the first trade privilege signing, after Vlaicu's negotiations with the royal envoy Demetrius Lepes on behalf of Brasov' Saxon merchants, and urgent need of currency to support bilateral balance of payments and fees.

In either of the two moments in time, the first monetary issue design must have complied with several political constraints and symbolically expose some powerful ideas specific to the young Carpathian state. The issue was dual, one with Latin legend, and one in Slavonic, Wallachia playing the role of turntable between the two cultures and addressing to both. It was meant to affirm the political stand of the issuer, without hurting sensibilities or fuelling animosities from neighbours, be they allies or suzerains.

Let us start noting, at this time there is a resemblance between the Angevin arms on the coins of Louis the Great and the one of Basarabs figured on those of voivode Vlaicu, missing only the French lilies from the senester field, just like buttons from tomb no. 10 at Argeş. However, the resemblance is rather

[61] *„It might again his dust scattered on ruination of Voditsa monastery, near Vârciorova, which he also did erect on the Danube, offering it expensive gifts",* Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor în chipuri şi icoane (History of Romanians in faces and icons)*, Humanitas Publishing House, 2012.

coincidental and inherited. When minting his first coin issue, Vladislav was in no way close to king Louis. The absence of lilies may mean that no concession has taken place and the reason of shield's marshalling must be sought elsewhere. The most exciting hypothesis is the heraldic augmentation after the Severin's acquisition by Basarab I, sometimes around 1324. By keeping this field on his coat of arms, Vlaicu proved heraldically that Severin was under Wallachian control, or at least a pretence of that.

The most closely resembling Wallachian coin with Angevin ducat is, according to the mentioned numismatic catalogue, *the type III Wallachian common ducat, Latin legend*. As about *type I Wallachian ducat*, indicated by O. Iliescu to be Vlaicu's first currency issue, we believe that it happened in other historical moment.

Next, we'll offer a more attractive hypothesis regarding this occurrence, in a time of significant political events which truly deserved to be "advertised" in a symbolic, heraldic-type key, on the most circulating physical support: the currency.

### 4.2. Propaganda by heraldic symbols engraved on coins

Let us look first the ducat intended for exchanges with the Catholic world. The design of the *type III Wallachian common ducat*, which is in our opinion the first currency issue in chronological order, has a very good workmanship[62] indicating the involvement of a skilled craftsman, apparently foreigner, familiar with heraldic-type elements and Gothic font used for Louis the Great golden ducat legend. In addition, we find here the aspiration towards excellence specific to all beginnings. Minted some-time around 1365-1368, probably in the new mint at Argeş, the silver denier has 18 mm in diameter and weights 1.05 grams.

*"Latin" ducat of Vladislav I Vlaicu (type III common Wallachian, no. cat. 14 in MBR, photo from MMV)*

On the obverse, it shows a *French shield, barry of 8 dimidiated by a plain field*. Legend is: † M LADIZLAI WAIWODE. On the reverse appears a crest consisting of a bird sitting on a closed combat helmet with lambrequins. The bird's

[62] Not claiming exhaustivity in research, almost all the coinage images from this paper are the ones displayed in exquisite graphical conditions on the internet site *Monedele Moldovei şi Valahiei* (*monederomanesti.cimec.ro*), by Bogdan Costin and Alexandru Pînzar from the Cultural Association „Memory of Suceava" (©2003-2010).

head is turned towards a cross issuing from a half-opened wing and appears to kiss it. As legend, we have the continuation of the obverses' text, †TRANSALPINI. Read as a whole, with M as usual abbreviation for MONETA, the legend presents the first *„coin of Ladislaus (Vladislav), voivode of the Country beyond the mountains"*. This recursant bird with cross, called nowadays *Aquila Valahica,* will remain since then the official Wallachian emblem.

Heraldic element outside the shield, the crest is a highly complex graphical construction that was part of any medieval knight's coat of arms, carried on the helmet as distinctive sign in real battles or in tournaments. To be truly unmistakable, it had to be original. Its appearance at Basarabs implies exactly the same discussion as the shield emblem: can it be a heraldic concession from the feudal suzerain, or it was born at the initiative, even genius, of the bearer? What do we know to date about this heraldic symbol?

Tudor-Radu Tiron adheres to Szabolcz de Vajay opinion, which places it in the pantheon of Hungarian heraldry, very semblable with the totemic bird *Turúl* of Arpadian nomadic tribes[63]. Other specialists came with different opinions. Dan Cernovodeanu considers that at the beginning it was a black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) who evolved into a golden eagle (*Aquila chrisaëtos*) endemic in the Carpathians[64]. Later Wallachia came under the political influence of John Hunyadi and, because of the pride of having as leader a maternal line descendant of Basarabs, the bird was equated with the heraldic raven of the Hungarian governor's arms. Further in time, when Basarab dynasty extinguished, the double-headed eagle of Byzantine ancestry was used, to return in modern times to the plain eagle.

Considering the excellent impression of the Vladislav I Vlaicu „Latin" ducat, we introduce a new hypothesis: the first bird-crest was in fact the representation of a **gray partridge** (*Perdix perdix, photo Wikipedia*). What arguments support this? One is visual, other is linguistic. The partridge have a sturdy body, pointed wings, elongated neck and a slightly curved beak, elements found to the bird on the coin's reverse. As for an etymological argument, in Hungarian partridge is *fogoly*, and *fogoros* or *fogros* is the name of the hunting area for this game. The Romanians of Transylvania is calling the partridge even now *fugău* or *fugle* and despite its humble dimensions they appreciate it for *„the lofty stature and proud*

[63] Tudor-Radu Tiron, *At the border of two worlds. Hungarian and Polish Influences upon the Wallachian and Moldavian Mediaeval Heraldry (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries)* in *Genealogica & Heraldica. Proceedings of the XXXth International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences, held at Maastricht, 24-28 September 2012*, s'Gravenhage, Stichting De Nederlandse Leeuw, 2014, p.348.
[64] Dan Cernovodeanu, *op. cit*, pg. 43-44.

*zeal"*[65] in protecting its chicken. The partridge was a delight for nobility and crowned heads, so they were intensively hunted for sport on the royal domains, as was the case of the „duchy" of Fogoros/Făgăraş. If this territory was previously the land of Negru Vodă, a partridge as crest would be the perfect heraldic way to make known the claimed area, as **canting arms**.

For the crest's value of persistence, it was necessary that this initial bearer to be also leader of the dynastic Basarab House. Was him Radu Tatomir, the Dismounter of Câmpulung and Argeş? Or was him Iohannitsa Basarab, the Wallachian unfaithful to the Hungarian crown? Looking from historical events' perspective, value of symbol is achieved here not by bird's species, but by its posture, the unusual turned head. Having man as main predator, the partridge has the habit of running in front of the hunter, and then stopping on the spot, his head turned towards where the danger comes. It is a specific, natural posture of maximum attention and focus on danger. Once identified, the partridge can find a rescue strategy. As we will see, this was also very often throughout history the behaviour of the voivodes from the House of Basarab.

On the type III denier's reverse, the bird seems to turn the head towards the cross carried on its back. This was interpreted as religious reorientation or as political independence. Adrian Homutescu launches an iconoclastic hypothesis[66]: at the first series of ducats, the cross was just part of the legend as beginning sign († TRANSALPINI), its position close to the bird's beak being only an interesting coincidence. But the result was so harmonious and significant, that it was taken over by the next voivodes, so the cross became an integral part of the Wallachia's emblem. In this view, the initial crest consisted only of a turned-head bird, a powerful symbol itself: looking at the danger when moving away from it. This is explained by the context in which Negru Vodă crossed the mountains in 1290-91. He decided to leave after death of king Ladislaus IV the Cuman, considering his position threatened by the new throne owner, Andrew III (1290-1301), who began his reign by quelling former king's closes. He eventually confiscate Făgăraş and Sâmbăta domains, bestowing them to his henchman, Ugrinus Csák. Disgraced, Tatomir chose to move and cross the mountains, keeping nevertheless the sight, meaning the claim, back on his former lands. The partridge's posture suggests exactly this moment and as crest it might be attributed to the *Dismounter* himself. Of course, it can't be a heraldic concession either, and for good reasons. Afterwards, political tribulations manifested heraldically in the coinage minting and drove to new versions. If on the blazoned shield later cadencies will occur, the bird's turned head, be it partridge, vulture, eagle or raven, will endure over centuries as heraldic standard crest and it will be synonymous with the identity of Wallachia.

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[65] Information taken from http://vanatoare.info/specii-de-vanat/potarnichea-perdix-perdix/

[66] Adrian Homutescu, *Elemente de heraldică românească (Elements of Romanian heraldry)*, paper published on *www.romaniancoins.org*.

On his ducat's obverse, Vladislav Vlaicu used the arms inherited from his predecessors, most likely in continuity with the heraldic vestige from tomb no.10. About the bird's head, it was natural to remain turned. The voivode began his rule by a relation of strained mistrust with Louis the Great, who reproached him in a message the continuation of his father „bad habits". Alexander severed the ties with Hungary not long after Basarab I death and demonstratively manifested his preference for Orthodoxy by establishing the Argeş Metropolitan See and the ritualistic takeover of the baptismal name Nicholas. Louis the Great, which as Charles Robert before him, had sometimes the political satisfaction of bestowing heraldic signs on important vassals' shields[67], did not entertained such relaxed relations with the voivodes of Transalpina. Similarity of blazons in that period was given in our opinion just by the observance of the same heraldic rules.

Elements of dynastic continuity suggested by the shield, the weighty legend and lack of any sign of autocracy who could provoke Hungarian sensibilities, on one hand, and also the symbolism encoded as canting arms in bird's position, all these makes us to suspect that we have here Vlaicu's first currency issue. In the same time bold and concessive, it appeared in a political and economic moment well-established in history. The Latin legend displayed on the first monetary issue let us also to believe that Vlaicu interrupted the political ties with Hungary only, and not with the entire Catholic world, and especially the economic ones with Transylvania and Saxon merchants of Braşov and Sibiu.

The version with Slavonic legend of this first-issued ducat was destined for trade with the Orthodox world. It plenty deserves a closer look.

*„Slavonic" ducat of Vladislav I Vlaicu (type III common Wallachian, no. cat. 17 in MBR)*

On obverse, the striped shield is having plain odd stripes with thickened edges, and even ones with some aesthetical crossed hatches, which seems to imply a different colour than even stripes on the Latin ducat (Shishman-Sratsimir House's sinople?). Senester field is full/plain. The shield supports above a tiny hermine-like sign, a possible mint mark.

The legend †IѠANВЛIATICЛAВOIВOДA (IoanVlatislavoivoda) suffers from acute lack of space. For gaining fractions of a millimetre, the engraver resorted to

[67] Lilies for the Kotromanić House from Bosnia, Arpadian stripes for counts of Celje (Cilli) in Slovenia, even the entire House's shield, as for voivode Dragoş of Maramureş.

several tricks: used the thinner letter **I** (iota) instead of **И** (ije) in two places, reversed the **Д** from ВЛАДІСЛАВ, making us to read it rather as **Т**, and avoids repeating the **В** at the name's end, by continuing with ОІВОДА. And of course, no spacing allowed between words. Why this space crisis? Because it was absolutely essential to engrave first the hieratic name IѠAN (Ιωάννης = anointed of God), that only the Byzantine-Slavonic world could fully understand. It is both an intitulation and a name, expression of the issuer's most noble, imperial and Asenid descent. By default, it is the way of asserting his divine right to rule his country, irrespective of his allies and potential overlords. Such a declaration of might worth giving up some space.

On the reverse appears the same crest described above. In addition to the „Latin" ducat, this one has on dexter, under the bird's chest, a six-ray star. We note the exquisite artistical quality of the entire crest representation (on only 18 mm width!) and the star's possible heraldic significance. As golden on red, it would define an illustrious-in-arms individual[68]. On the other hand, the six-ray star is a traditional solar symbol of Carpathian-Balkanic civilization, engraved in wood and stone since immemorial times.

The reverse's legend does not refer this time to a territory, as in the „Latin" version, but resume the hieratic name IѠAN (Ioan), well framed behind the *cross fitchy* suggesting a processional cross. The stem that penetrates the bird's back seems to contradict Homutescu theory very shortly after the first appearance of the cross-sign on the „Latin" ducat. It is true, it can be argued that the bird does not look like a partridge anymore, but rather seems like an eagle. Responsible is of course the engraver, who compensating for the text constraints has taken on a series of heraldic artistic liberties. Next word, ВЛАТІ (Vlati), seems shortened, again because of lack of space caused by crest's generous representation. However, why would appear this time **Т**, while having fairly enough space for **Д**? Could be this their pronunciation, Vlatislav instead of Vladislav? Or does it mean something else? If instead of **Т** we read the Slavonic **Х**, it would make perfect sense † IѠAN (as in *"autocrat ruler"*) ВЛАХІ (Vlahi, short of *Vlahiskoi*, meaning *of the Wallachians*).

In terms of graphics, the „Slavonic" ducat bears the same quality signature of the mint who realized the first issue, but after some mannerisms noticed the master engraver seems to be different, this time one anchored in the orthodox civilization. We can ask if this time the dynastic continuity is heraldically declared by south-Danubian connection of the Sratsimir Imperial House.

[68] L. Foulques-Delanos, *op. cit.*

At first glance, the thickened edges of the odd fesses (1-7) and the *fretté*-style hatches on the even ones (2-8) could be „read" as such *avant-la-lettre* colour indications or a primitive form of diapering, which we found previously in the era[69]. Thus, this trend was not introduced until the Renaissance and, as much as we wish, hatches may not have any colour significance, knowing that the standard of chromatic transposition by hatches and points was adopted by the end of 1600's. I believe nevertheless that a closer look to the graphical microelements could give us some indication about the true colours of Vlaicu's coat of arms. Enhancing eight times the image of the shield, we observe elements which first eludes the eye.

*The blazoned shield on the „Slavonic" ducat with micro-elements (rings and hatches). Comparison with the blazoned button from tomb no. 10*

Microanalysis shows that the even fesses, besides edge's thickening, use to have initially some sort of diapering too. Using a punch, circular impressions were created on the coin die, the negatives of which are still visible on the 5th fess and, perhaps by mistake, but perfectly preserved in the deep relief, on the embossed field of fess no. 2. These „rings" alternate, two or three, with hatched areas identical to those in the even fields.

Their alignment makes us believe that we do not look at simple casting inclusions but delicate ornamental elements, wiped off by the wearing specific to coins. The elements follow a clear pattern: in dexter field the odd fesses have rings combined with hatches and the even fesses appear to be completely hatched. In the senester field, the most affected by wear, we notice a complex lacing that resumes the pattern on the odd fesses: rings alternating with hatches. In my opinion, the engraver left the posterity hints on Basarab's coat of arms' colors. **The odd fesses and the senester field have the same colour**, probably the *gold* we saw on the blazoned button from tomb no. 10, and the fretté-hatched fesses represented as consequence the *sinople* (green). In conclusion, we face here besides the aesthetical expression of engraver's talent as miniaturist, the

[69] Fretté hatches on odd fesses are visible on some dinars issued by king Charles I Robert of Hungary (1308-1342).

colors of Vladislav's coat of arms which were, not by chance, the same as those of the prince buried at Curtea de Argeş, that is to say, of Basarab House.

We can notice further on the „Slavonic" ducat the daring legend, displayed by an autocratic ruler, which allows us to understand the double standard in which the voivode present himself to his „public": unassuming in front of the potential idiosyncrasies of the Catholic world represented by Louis of Anjou, and bold in front of south-Danubian emperors, which in that historic moment (1365) posed no threat, being in great deal of difficulty due to the military aggression from Hungarians (John Sratsimir) and Turks (John Alexander and John V Palaiologos).

Vladislav I materialized his double autonomy from Hungary and Bulgaria also by an original monetary issue. It's about striking a countermark on a great amount of Bulgarian silver grossi minted in Târnovo by his uncle, Tsar John Alexander (1341-1371). When would occur this issue? Bulgarian history notes that the Tsar of Târnovo organized an orthodox alliance for Badin recovery. The Danubian fortress and related hinterland entered since 1365 in Hungary's possession, who had taken captive the imperial family members from here: Tsar John Sratsimir, Tsarina Ana (Vlaicu's sister), and nun Teofana, the repudiated wife of Tsar John Alexander (voivode's aunt). Subsequently, the Franciscan monks began an intense campaign of country's Catholicization, which caused the anxiety and indignation of the population.

Armed intervention on Badin took place late 1368 or early 1369, amid a local uprising against the occupier. In order to expedite Vlaicu's military operation, through a complex diplomatic and financial scheme that included the Byzantine Emperor, held prisoner at that time by the Bulgarians, the Romanian voivode received the equivalent of 180.000 Venetian florins. Payment was made in Târnovo grossi (around 900.000 pieces). Why this stimulant was necessary? Wallachia just breathed of relief after Vlaicu's troops had heroically resisted the shock of a formidable two-directions Hungarian campaign, from Severin and Transylvania. Defending your land is for free, but in order to fight for someone else's interest, a handsome reward could speed up things.

Despite the political bribe received from the two emperors, the intervening voivode preferred to act strictly in the interests of his brother-in-law. His determined intervention was a success. Wallachians conquered fortress Belogradchik, besieged the Hungarian garrison of Badin and released the rest of his relatives' territory. Then, by diplomacy, king Louis was persuaded to give up the idea of a Hungarian Banate of Bulgaria and to reinstate John Sratsimir under Angevin suzerainty. The political price paid by a winning Vlaicu for his sister's freedom was paradoxically quite big: loss of sovereignty. But he was lured with the right

bait. For acknowledging king Louis' suzerainty, he received in fief the ancestral duchy of Făgăraş and tacit royal acceptance of keeping the Severin.

The countermark struck on Bulgarian grossi' reverse, displayed no artistical ambitions, simply depicting inscribed in a circle the ruling Wallachian House arms: *barry of 8, dimidiated by plain field*. If the coins were marked after the 1368-69 campaign as we assert, they must have been employed inclusively for the payment of troops who accompanied Vlaicu in campaign, to be used further as currency on the Wallachian territory.

*Bulgarian gross of Târnovo (reverse with Jesus Christ) and the place of the arms countermarked on another coin*

This monetary improvisation has its undoubted importance: confirms the strong ties between Basarab and Shishman-Sratsimir dynasties, and also Vlaicu's involvement in the political affairs of Bulgarian Tsars. Altering a foreign currency, even more, the one belonging to the emperor, even if uncle and member of the extended family, was in fact an act of lèze-majesty. It should be judged as a double meaning: a sign of political emancipation and an economic necessity.

Year 1369 was important: Vlaicu rendered homage to king Louis the Great, accompanied him in campaign against the former liege Tsar John Alexander and accepted a pastoral visit of a Catholic bishop-vicar from the Hungarian hierarchy. It seemed that this would be his political path further, and his former diplomatic efforts to get closer to Byzantium were forgotten. Emperor John V Palaiologos did not. After a fruitless West-European tour, desperately trying to assemble an anti-Ottoman coalition, also benefiting from the reflection period due to his brief detention in Bulgaria, he finally saw this growing-in-power neighbour as interesting, active and powerful, which could contribute for turning the odds of Balkan's geopolitics, for the time being favourable to Turkish expansion. In this context, after only one year since accepting Hungarian suzerainty, Vlaicu stopped the political orientation to Hungary, evolving into another ruler: he founded the second Metropolitan See headed by the Greek hierarch *kir* Antim, imposed a Wallachian garrison in Dristra/Silistra, strategic imperial citadel on Danube, and forged an alliance with the Byzantines and Serbians against the Turks. It is credible that this pro-Orthodox political effervescence was the background for

issuing of a ducat containing new heraldic elements, which deviate from the established rules.

The obverse shows a French shield *barry of four, thickened traits, with odd fesses hatched in saltire and even ones plain, dimidiated by a field charged with a waning crescent*. These traits are remnants of odd fesses of the classic Basarab herb, which we will comment onwards. Shield is having above a cross with even arms, slightly potenced. Legend is † IШ ВЛАДІСЛАВЪ ВОЕВШДЪ (Io Vladislavă voevodă).

*Ducat Vladislav I with two bars dimidiated by crescent moon*
*(uncatalogued, from an international auction in 2013)*

On the coins' reverse is engraved a senester helmet with lambrequins, bearing an incuse cross and having as crest the recursant bird with the same cross in front of its beak. Interesting, to allow the cross insertion, they renounced to engrave the last B from the legend. Senester, facing the bird, we have the six-ray star previously seen on the „Slavonic" issue. Legend is +IШANВЛАДІСЛА+ (Ioan Vladisla). Compared with the ducat discussed above, it's easy to see how this design is making big heraldic concessions. The cross above the shield, unlike characteristics of the striped field and the Slavonic legend publicly evokes a crucial event. We can argue this paradigm shift by Vladislav's major political reorientation, with enormous consequences on religious field.

In the process of designing this issue, it is unlikely that the engraver didn't understood the model or to be inspired by a poor-quality drawing. He rather applied deliberately elements with new symbolic value required by the voivode himself. The cross-potenced above shield can be considered as a signal: it draws our attention from start about following symbols as having religious significance, the entire shield being the image of the House of God. This because from heraldic point of view the fesses on the dexter field are completely fanciful. Half of the eight fesses were thinned up to the line, leaving only four, of which the odd ones are charged with a thin fretté hatchet. Knowing that *fesse* translates as *beam*, horizontal piece of resistance in a building, they can symbolize the two Orthodox Metropolitan Sees, whose functioning consolidate the new Wallachian construction. The crescent in the senester field resembling letter **C** is a heraldic charge, not a mint mark, and is a Slavonic pictogram interpreted by epigraphist George

Voica as **свет** (saint)[70]. On the other hand, together with a star or alone, it was one of the main symbols of Byzantium. It reinforces the significance of the two hatched stripes. The whole shield could be read as: *"behold the two Metropolitan seats of Ungrovlachia, beams of the Holy Patriarchy of Constantinople"*.

On reverse, senester orientation of the crest-bearing helmet, along with the six-ray star, also indicates a political paradigm shift rather than artistical fantasy. It possibly means the sight facing East, where the Ottoman danger was, pointing the sun as victory sign, or again as symbol for Byzantium. Also, about the legend in Slavonic we can say two important things. First, it supports eloquently the Orthodox speech of the symbols attached to heraldic elements, Slavonic being the country's liturgical language. Second, instead of country's name is repeated the voivode's name, including the hieratic name IWAN (anointed of God) discussed before, reinforcing the personal declaration of faith and the author of this pivotal decision.

With a Catholic father converted to Orthodoxy (Nicholas Alexander) and Catholic mother (Mary Lackfi), praised by the Pope for his Catholic zeal in his youth, Vladislav's confessional orientation is virtually unknown since the throne accession and the 1369 donation for Athos, the revered point of Orthodoxy. True, steps were taken before, when together with Metropolitan Hyacinth and the whole Voivodal Council, he asked at Constantinople for establishment of a second orthodox metropolitan See after the one created at Argeş by his father. Meanwhile, his stepmother, lady Clara, always encouraged Catholic proselytism conducted in the country by the Franciscan friars, and even Vlaicu, after his gesture of fealty, approved that itinerant bishop-vicar in Wallachia. So, the year 1370 in which Byzantium finally considered as legitimate the former requests, proved to be pivotal for country's confessional path.

It is fascinating to watch the political development of a ruler caught between two great powers, Bulgaria and Hungary, suzerains in different historical moments, who manages through bivalent but firm military and diplomatic actions, to strengthen his territorial, economic and religious autonomy. Only by understanding that his monetary issues illustrated astral moments of the Wallachian state evolution among these political meanders, we can see how much of the western heraldic standards actually penetrated in Balkan-Carpathian area, and how much was the fruit of local artistic symbolism.

In our opinion, some heraldic charges seemingly out of place accounted for strong visual messages which „spoke" in that time to all currency users. We support here the idea that **heraldic symbolism played for Vladislav I Vlaicu a**

[70] George Voica, *Hieroglifele din Ţara Loviştei (Lovişte Country's hieroglyphs)*, paper at the 14th Congress of Dacology, Buzau, 2013.

**propagandistic role by public dissemination of contemporary events, crucial for the throne and dynasty**. As we shall see, the same must be true for a good number of his successors.

As conclusion, we hold that this coin with neat graphics and well targeted symbolistic issuance to be dated in 1370, the founding year of Severin metropolitan See and of arrival in Wallachia of the Serbian-Vlach monk Nicodemus, the future saint of Tismana. Clearly it can't be the first issue of Vladislav I Vlaicu's reign, as advocated by Octavian Iliescu. As Hungarian vassal, even only formally, he minted the first coins respecting the coat of arms achievements inherited from his grandfather. Only after a while, turning towards Balkanic powers, Bulgaria, Serbia and Byzantium, he made the political and cultural shift to Orthodoxy. The unprecedented coat of arms, represented in several different silver ducats' issues, 19 of them available nowadays[71], has no heraldic value itself, but is testimony of a historical moment with lasting consequences across the whole country: the ruling House ended the indecision between the two Christian rites and firmly oriented towards the Orthodoxy embraced by their Wallachian people, even if some of its members of both sexes were at personal level worshipers of the Roman Church.

## 5. Radu I. First cadency of Basarab coat of arms

According to Romanian historiography, Vladislav Vlaicu was succeeded by his brother **Radu I (1374/77-1385)**, born from the marriage of Nicholas Alexander with Lady Mary, scion of Lackfi family, who produced several voivodes of Transylvania and Croatian Bans. Absence of descendants of the former made the latter eligible as ruler of Wallachia sometimes around 1374/77.

Radu's life as successor apparent could take, according to the mores of the time, several directions: plotting to overthrow the regnant voivode, becoming a monk as proof his lack of political ambitions, staying in his relative's service or turning to a knight-errant in search of his own Grail. Lacking historical sources, we don't know what choice made the young prince. The best evidence of him being a loyal subject is the very reign of Vladislav I, full of difficult moments externally, but smoothly developed internally. Radu could anytime become the leader of a pro-Catholic political faction, close to Hungary. If he ever acted outside the voivode-established framework, we would have heard from Hungarian historical sources. This fraternal loyalty, rather unusual in that time of personal ambition, suggests even a temporary absence from public life. It is possible that at one time after his father's death, as gesture of relinquishment to any dynastic ambition, to retire in a monastery. An argument would be the strange name *Godon* attributed in 1377 in a Hungarian text, consonant with the monastical name *Gideon*. On the other hand, is would be easy for a chancellery scribe to write by mistake „Godon"

[71] It is about the 19 variants of the *common Wallachian ducat-type I*, on-line in the virtual museum *Romanian coins and banknotes* (monederomanesti.cimec.ro).

instead of „Rodon", phonetically similar in Hungarian with Radan(us), the name which Radu was known by Venetian diplomacy. Whatever the case, his dynastic loyalty was rewarded around 1372, when Vlaicu associated him officially as co-voivode, ensuring the throne succession in absence of direct male descendants from his marriage with *Kira* Ana.

During their coregency Vladislav and Radu issued two types of coins, *deniers* and *bani*, both having heraldic elements. The jointly issued deniers are important in two respects. Layout variants, one having Vlaicu's name on obverse, the other with Radu's, indicates firstly how power relations between them shifted between 1372 and 1377, the former giving up pre-eminence probably due to health weakening, and secondly, we shall note the emergence in the senester field of Basarab arms of the first form of heraldic cadency.

The first version (*type I-a*) of joint-issued coins is a denier having on Vlaicu's dedicated obverse a French shield encircled by small pearls. The blazon have the usual barry of 8 dimidiated this time by an absolute novelty, a field charged with monogram Θ (Θита). The legend is †IW ВЛАДІСЛАВЪ ВОЕВД (Io Vladislavă voevd). Denier's reverse is dedicated to Radu and shows the helmet with bird-crest oriented dexter and legend † IW РАДОУЛА (Io Radoula), with inversed Р.

*Denier type I-a (obverse Vladislav, reverse Radu) having Theta monogram in senester field. (no. cat. 33 cf. MBR, photo MBR). The first known cadency form of Basarab arms*

We didn't found a picture of *type I-b* denier, the one with the pre-eminence of Radu, but MBR (catalogue no. 37) ensures us that the arms have the same monogram in the senester field, the only difference consisting of the legend: obverse with † IW РАДОУЛОС ВОЕВѠДА (Io Radoulos voevoda), and on the reverse † IW ВЛАДІСЛАВ (Io Vladislav). In addition, there is material proof that prince Radu was wise and practical: the mint was asked to re-strike some deniers of *type I-a Vlaicu-Radu* from the vault, adding to the name РАДОУЛА on reverse one short ВОЕВ, despite by lacking any space the last letter was iconoclastically superposed over the recursant bird's head (cat. no. 34 in MBR). This was an obvious silver saver gesture, replacing a necessary new issue with Radu at helm. It was probably out of respect that this countermarking operation was done only after Vlaicu's death. In other words, this would be his first issue as „sole ruler".

As for *ban*, we have only one anepigraphic version. The layout is rough, and details are harder to decipher. The obverse has a simple and elegant heraldic composition, full of symbolism: *a cross anchored cantoned by two stars, 1 and 4, and Slav monograms* ***P*** *(Radu) in 2, respectively* ***B*** *(Vladislav) in 3*. On reverse we have a more elaborate composition, with a shield tilted almost horizontally, held in its claws by a recursant bird supporting a cross-potence fitched.

The shield is barry of 4, odd fasces plain and even ones hatched *fretté*, dimidiated by plain/hollow field. To the dexter, in front of schematic engraved bird, appear two overlapped logos difficult to read. They don't copy symbols from obverse, so they can be either mint marks, or other heraldic charges representing the two voivodes. The above looks like a **Θ** and the other like letter **C** or symbol ⌴ . Neither resembles to marks used then by the local mint, so it would have to represent Radu and Vlaicu.

*Silver ban Radu I and Vladislav I: obverse with P and B, reverse with θ and C (no. cat. 39 in MBR)*

We note several aspects: intended resemblance of the cantoned cross with the prestigious imperial emblem of Palaiologos, cross cantoned by 4 monograms **B**, resumption the symbolism belonging to *type I Vlaicu* ducat, when the „two metro-politan Sees" from above could be read here also as „two voivodes", and not least the same monogram **Θ** as seen on *type I-a Vlaicu-Radu* denier. The message sent by the small denomination revealed the pride of belonging to the Byzantine civilization elite and the two Basarab princes' confidence in their country's strength despite all military, economic and religious attacks coming from abroad.

Radu I was also consistent to claim his ancestry through coinage, using Basarab arms on both versions of *deniers* preserved from him. First coin in the order proposed by MBR inventory, *type I Radu*, introduces a good number of heraldic charges in the shield's senester field. The most frequent symbol is the monogram **Θ**. Other logos are the fleur-de-lys, a two-petal flower ϒ (iota)-like and a bow without arrow shaped like a **D** (maybe a clumsy representation of **Θ**).

*Radu I deniers (type I). Only the first version appears on Slavonic legend' coins, the rest only on Latin legend' issues (nr. cat. 52, 46, 50, 51 cf. MBR)*

All these less used charges are placed on the obverse of coin issues bearing Latin legend. This interesting exclusivity should have significance in itself, linked maybe to the circulation area of coins. Not even in this particular case we don't think that logos are mint marks. They must be all heraldic symbols related to political moments from which we did not received information.

Genealogist O. Lecca observed over a century ago the widespread habit of Romanian noble family members to change, sometimes radical, their families heraldic symbols, *"even from father to son"*[72]. Given that in the medieval world the arms talk about the armigers who actually bear them, cadency was justified by need for individualization, by biographical stages covered, or, as Vlaicu has done, by historical moments deserving to be published for remembrance. From there to engraving on the material with the widest circulation in the country – the currency – was only one step.

We assume that the result of such biographical developments must have been Radu I issue of deniers *type II (with knight)*, with a western-style design never encountered before.

*Denier type II Radu I (with knight), Latin legend (no. cat. 72 in MBR)*

On the obverse is engraved for the first time the complete Basarab achievement of arms, blazoned shield, helmet and crest, a correct composition in terms of heraldic proportions. The issuer appears on the reverse standing in suit of armour, lance in his right hand and Basarab shield in his left. The arms on the obverse, Latin legend reading on both sides † MONЄTA RADOWI TRANSALPINI and the slender figure on the reverse are details that show the appearance in the

[72] Octav-George Lecca, *Familiile boereşti române. Istoric şi genealogie (Romanian boyar's families. History and genealogy)*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1899, p. XLIII.

Wallachian mint, the one of Argeş or the newly established one at Severin, of a master engraver who could comply with the blazoning rules of western chivalry. But he could mostly mirror the voivode's desire to be perceived in a certain way, in a well-defined moment of his political career, and to invest in this image.

This breath of west-European air in a country committed of two generations to Balkan-Byzantine ties is consistent with one of the very few historical data we have about Radu, briefly noted in the „Cronaca Carrarese" of Gatari brothers[73]:

*„(MCCCLXXVII) It was therefore in Hungary a great battle between the Holy majesty king Louis and Radan, prince of Bulgaria, the non-believer; that is they were forty thousand men on each side and it was a great killing of non-believers and Christians, but more of non-believers; and it was close for the king to be defeated, because the Signoria had given to non-believers ten thousand horses' armours, and the ten thousand armed like this charged towards the king Louis' person and were close to capture him; but God's help was felt there and handed power and victory to king Louis, so non-believers were scattered and many were killed and captured; about this victory the king of Hungary wrote to the lord of Padua, being certain that any of his victory will rejoice him"* (our translation from Italian).

The text informs us that in 1377 king Louis the Great carried out a military expedition to Wallachia to subdue Radan the non-believer. It's not surprising to see the name of Radu styled as prince of Bulgaria. He must retain the control over Badin, control established *de facto* in his brother's time. Harder to believe is that this attack happened really in 1377, when Louis was absorbed by an anti-Lithuanian crusade in Galicia and Lodomeria. It is true that year 1382 brings information about battles waged by the Hungarians both in Lodomeria and Wallachia, so the same double campaign could have happened five years earlier. However, Radu was well prepared for the eventuality of attack, buying Venetian weapons and armours for 10.000 horses, a probable exaggeration that does not diminish the voivode's merit of thinking, order, and pay for a heavy cavalry unit as strategic shock force. The purchasing cost must have been enormous, comparable nowadays with the equipment of a regiment of tanks, but at least timing was good.

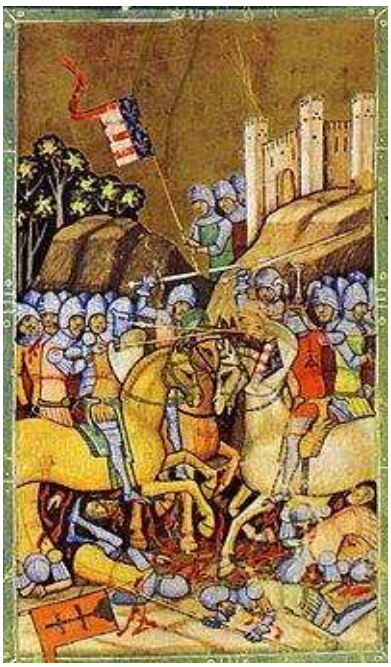
First, Radu took advantage of a moment when Venice was in good relations with Romanian's Byzantine ally and in bad ones with the Hungarian rival. Then he had diplomatic resources to enter into negotiations with Signoria, probably with the help of his Bosnian relatives. Kotromanić House maintained close ties with the Venetians, and Radu was the uncle of queen Dorothea of Badin, the wife of king Tvrtko I. Also, Radu himself seems to have been married to a Kotromanić

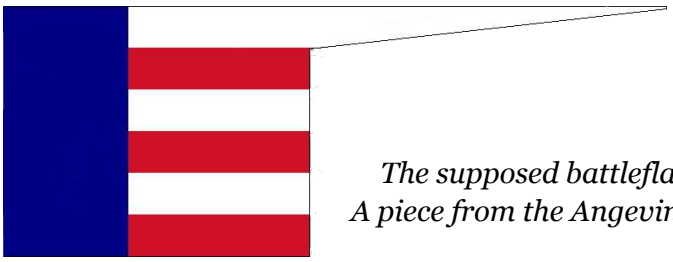
[73] L. A. Muratori, Giosue Carducci, Vittorio Fiorini, *Rerum italicarum scriptores: raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al mille-cinquecento*, vol. XVII, page 145 (text from *Cronaca Carrarese* by Gatari brothers), digitized by Internet Archive, 2011.

princess, but we don't know much about her. But all these relationships would have been useless if he did not have in the treasury the needed silver.

According to the chronicler, the charge of Wallachian heavy cavalry, excellently equipped in the most western style, had been close to capture the Angevine king himself. Although the chronicler describes flatteringly a result favourable to the latter, consequences were not at all major. Maybe the purpose of the campaign was to swiftly recover Severin in the aftermath of Vlaicu's death. In the letter sent to his Paduan ally, advertised and copied in *Cronaca* by Gatari, king Louis enumerate that year's successes of the Lodomeria' crusade, being silent of what happened in Wallachia. Considering Radu's issue of deniers with Angevin lily (cat. no. 46 in MBR), we believe that the maximum the king would obtained was a Wallachian homage for Făgăraş and Severin. A tiny result that did not pleased him since he launched a second campaign in 1382.

Echo of the epic clenching between Hungarian crusaders and Wallachian iron-clad cavalry may have reached the heralds Gelre and Bershammar, hence the presence in armorials, bottom of the list of great kingdom's vassals, of that mysterious *Her Raeskin Scoonavaer* alias *Raczek de Vleskoviz Derslawiz* with his coat of arms *azure dimidiated by argent-gules stripes*. This emblem must be noted by some Polish or Bohemian opponents fighting on Louis' crusaders side and passed over later to Claes Heynenszoon, along with the owner's name in the language of the informer: Raczek or Radek. The heraldic insignia would be visible from afar, most likely being a battle flag. If it would be part of the blazoned trophy won by Iohannitsa Basarab I in „the 4 days battle" from 1330, as we presume, that relic flag carried a special symbolism reminding of the brilliant victory against Hungarians and being an element of utmost importance for boosting in battle the Wallachian troop's moral. *(photo: shape and colors of the House Anjou-Hungary battle flag – source: "Cronicum pictum Vindobonenses", online on Wikipedia)*





*The supposed battleflag with dexter lance of Radu I in 1377.*
*A piece from the Angevine trophy captured by Basarab in 1330?*

From Radu's perspective, we can speculate that the denier with knight *type II* had been minted to cover the great weapon transaction with Venice. If so, this

was chronologically Radu's first monetary issue and the *type I* variants are subsequent to year 1377. Statistically analysing voivode's coins discovered so far, we find catalogued in MBR 28 versions of first type deniers. 17 of these bears the **Θ** monogram (60% of cases), 6 shows lilies, 3 are marked with the bow without arrow and one of monogram **ω** and one of plain field. From all 23 variants show by our informative source, the internet site *„Monedele Moldovei şi Valahiei. O expoziţie virtuală"* (*"Moldavia and Wallachia coins. A virtual exhibition"*, hereinafter referred in our text as MMV), a total of 18 bears senester the logo **Θ**, over three quarters of cases. Other two are marked with lily, and only once appears the letter **ω**, the bow without arrow and the plain field. Given that **Θ** occurred also in common currency minted by Radu and Vlaicu, it is evident that we are dealing here with **the first cadency form in Basarab arms**.

What about this heraldic charge? Looked closely on a good imprinted coin, the symbol strikingly resembles with one of the pictograms carved in the Middle Ages on tomb and boundary stones in Loviște Country[74], interpreted by prof. George Voica as a symbol of the Holy Virgin[75]. The only difference would be the rotated 90˚ clockwise position on coins. It resemble also with Slavonic **ε** (**ꙗⷣ҂ъ**) inscribed into an oval, with Ѡ (omega) of hieratic name IѠAN rotated 90˚ clockwise, or a stylized form of the waning crescent, reminding of the iconoclastic ducat *type I Vlaicu*. Most likely, this heraldic charge is a religious symbol, but rather a **Θ**, monogram standing for Θεος/God.

*Monogram Θ on denier type I Radu*
*in comparison with pictogram „Holy Virgin" from Loviște Country*

In conclusion, at Radu I we deal with a decision with heraldic resorts, of conscious individualization full of emphasis, made by a man who styled himself, including on some ducats minted during his reign, *Io Radu **great** voivode*. Unfortunately, on his accession he was already ageing, closer to the end than the beginning of life. If he had a longer reign, due to his integrity, administrative performance and political relevance in this part of the world, he who was called by the Italian chronicler *Radano, prinzipe di Bulgaria, infidele*[76], and by a German

[74] „Ţara Loviştei" (Loviște Country) is a 200 kmp depression in Meridional Carpathians, existing as historical microregion since immemorial time, part of Seneslav's voivodship and, after some opinions, there was conducted „the four days battle" (Posada) of Iohannitsa Basarab I in 1330.

[75] George Voica, *op.cit*.

[76] In *Cronaca Carrarese* by Galeazzo and Bartolomeo Gatari. Apparently, *Radu, prince of Bulgaria, unfaithful*, kept Vladislav I pre-eminence over the Badin Tsardom, being known also for his Orthodox faith who made him unfaithful in the Catholic Europe's eyes.

contemporary *Pancraz der Weise*[77], would have been certainly known in Romanian history as Radu the Great. Today however, largely due to the error made by monks who drafted the Tismana monastery diptych, Radu I is called sometimes Radu Negru, being confused without historical arguments with Negru Vodă. Even this confusion shows the huge prestige enjoyed by *Radu the Wise* in his country, decisively marking its history, although he ruled just about a decade, *„because of the shortage of life"*[78]. He was also a patron of Orthodoxy, rebuilding the princely church of Argeş and 4 famous monasteries, outbreaks of Romanian spirituality and culture: Tismana, Cozia, Cotmeana and Govora. As for the symbol or pictogram **Θ**, we are dealing with a cadency mark in every sense, with the amendment that in choosing it there were applied rather religious than heraldic principles.

## 6. Descendants of Radu I. *Inter arma silent musæ*

Of the two certain marriages, Radu I the Wise had three sons who reached maturity: Dan, Mircea and Staico. Two of them have succeeded to the throne. The first was Dan I, having as mother lady Ana. The other, Mircea I, was Calinikia's son. They are ancestors of the next two rival branches of Basarab: Danesti line and Draculesti line.

Remarkable is that **Dan I (1383-1386)**, in his reign of nearly four years and having for an unknown interval brother Mircea as co-ruler, was the first member of the dynasty who minted coin only with Slavonic legend. This is the clearest evidence of the stern religious orientation of Wallachia. As for the politics, we know that he opposed both Hungarians and Bulgarians, being assassinated during a campaign against Tsar Shishman, apparently at this one instigation. Meanwhile he had the needed respite and financial skills to simplify the monetary system of Wallachia, reducing the issues to only 2 categories: *ducat* (derived from *denier*) and *ban*. It is nevertheless possible that the merit for the monetary reorganisation would not be entirely his.

On the emblem that marked his ducats, besides the four characteristic bars in the dexter field, Dan I took over the senester father's cadency, that interesting monogram **Θ** interpreted as divine symbol. The cadency was kept also on one of the two coinage versions issued jointly with his brother Mircea.

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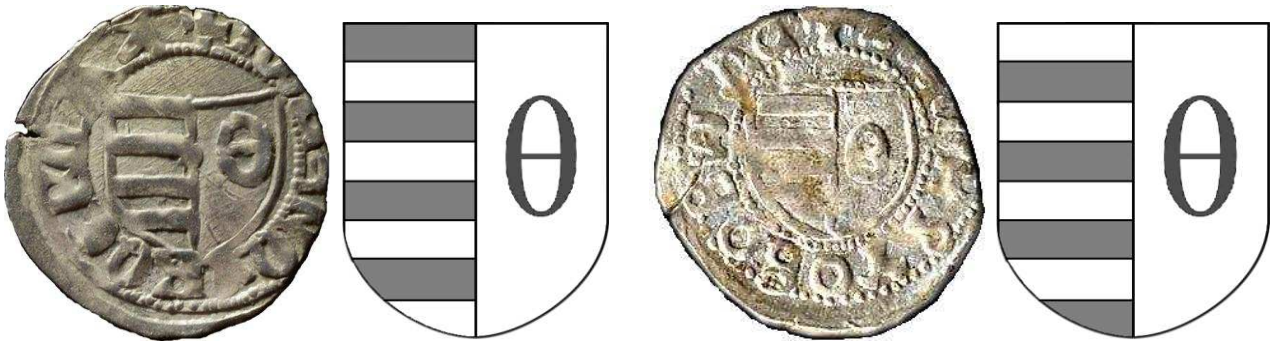
[77] *Pankraz the Wise*, named like this in the Eberhard Windeck chronicle *Book of Emperor Sigismund*, written between 1430-39. The name derives from Radu's position as Ban of Severin (Ban Raczek = Pankraz), and the honourable epithet *the Wise* attests his European prestige. The same chronic, showing a predilection for merging titles with names, mentions Mircea voivode as Merzeweidan.

[78] His son's (voivode Dan I) remark, made in a donation towards Tismana monastery in Oct. 3rd, 1385.



*Ducats: Dan I (no. cat. 83 in MBR) and Mircea I (uncategorised), Slavonic legends*

Sign of dynastic continuity, Mircea issued in his turn one version of ducats bearing senester the paternal monogram, sometime early in his reign. May be as cadency or not, he preferred to change the bars order, keeping nevertheless the **Θ**. Persistence of this heraldic charge leads us to believe that it had a strong significance for both generations of Basarabs. Divine protection seemed very necessary in a time when Europe was affected by catastrophic floods, plague, famine (all having as background the sharp climate cooling), events seen by all as signs of Doomsday coming (symbolized by monogram **Ш**).

During only four years of reign, the variety of currency issued by Dan I is downright extraordinary. The MBR catalogue of 1977 had limited access to private collections abroad, and local ones were blot out by the communist authorities. Therefore, they listed material from the state's collections, finding only 9 variants of ducat. Five of them have the coat of arms marked by symbol **Θ** and four with monogram **Ш**. Now, after 40 years with unlimited access, we have a synoptic image of the monetary treasure left behind by the founder of Danesti dynastic line. We find today with surprise the existence of at least 44 variants of Wallachian silver ducat, revealed to the general public by MMV internet site. This does not necessarily indicate a major influx of monetary mass, but rather small amounts of money, issued at short intervals. Constant currency issue was necessary on the market, concentration of silver could be manipulated, and the voivode just complied in the former case and take advantage in the latter. Dan I arms engraved on his *ducats* identified until today bears the **Θ** logo in 26 cases (59%), **Ш** (originated perhaps in the hieratical IШAN, the Holy Virgin, or Doomsday) for 14 variants (32%), and the letter **K** the remaining four (9%).

What about the two sons of Radu I cadencies? Given the short interval of Dan I rule, and the unknown timespan spent in association with Mircea, it's reasonable to think that the former had not the needed respite to establish his own heraldic cadency. This option was only on the reach of Mircea the Elder, destined with a long reign, even if interrupted for three years by the young Vlad, son of Dan I. Consequently, there are indications that the choice of both cadency variants struck on Dan I ducats (symbols **Ш** and **K**) and having as legend † IШ ДАNOV ВОЕВОДА belonged to Mircea, who must have had since the early years

of his brother's reign, besides military responsibilities, the management of the state's mint. Proof is the cadency on the single common issue of ducats minted by the two as associate voivodes, described by the authors of the 1977 numismatic catalogue[79].

The coin has on the obverse shield *barry of four dimidiated by a field charged with monogram* ***K***, the meaning of which we can explain in several ways. It could be the initial of the issuers' high rank (kings/princes, in Slavonic Краљ/Кнез), could „advertise" an important military event like occupation of Licostomo/Kilia castle on Danube[80] (in Greek Κελλια = grain warehouses), or it's about the Slavonic number **20**, whose contemporary meaning would be unknown. On the reverse appears the dexter helmet adorned by a cross potence and having a recursant bird on top, with same monogram **K** in front. Curiously, the legend presents on obverse Mircea, and not Dan as expected by age and precedence to the throne. This indicates in our opinion not the political pre-eminence of Mircea over his elder brother, but rather Mircea's control over the mint. Whether it is about the newly acquired control over Kilia castle, the legend combined with the arms augmented by monogram announces in fact who is the author of this success.

*Ducat type I Dan-Mircea: legend obverse † IW MHRЪЧA BOEBД, reverse † IW ДANOV BOIBO (cat. no. 91 MBR)*

Beginning with **Mircea I the Elder (1386-1394** and **1397-1418)**, the voivode who struck a huge amount of issues (118 series of ducats and 5 of bani catalogued in MBR, 82 of ducats and 7 of bani showed by MMV site), it is quite difficult to interpret the meaning of monograms, maybe with the notable exception of issues having as monogram the initial **M**, engraved more frequent reversed as **W**. In fact, not even here. The latter variant is so common, that we should wonder whether the form **M** is the one reversed by mistake (!). These two cadency options appear only on Latin legend ducats, making us to believe that **Mircea's preferred form of cadency was the symbol W.**

[79] George Buzdugan, Octavian Luchian, Constantin Oprescu, *MBR*, page 18.

[80] Occupation of Genovese fortress of Kilia (Licostomo) took place sometime during Mircea's reign, but we don't know if it happened before or after his brother's death in Bulgaria, in 1386.

*Mircea's arms main cadency on type I ducat with Latin legend † IWAN:DI:MVNCZ (no. cat 131 and 143 MBR)*

On coins bearing Slavonic legend the cadency symbols are more. In frequency order, we find monograms **Ѡ** (28%), **К** (12%), **П** (12%), ★ (7%), **Θ** (6%), **Ѧ**(6%), **ↃС** (double crescent or stylized **К**, 4%) and **Ч** (3%). The ancestral Basarab plain field dimidiation appears in 17% of cases, and the rest (5%) are illegible or marked with a quite random sign. The authors of Romanian Wikipedia page regarding Mircea the Elder opines referring to his coinage that *„on each of these, in addition to the usual legend, was marked by a letter, to identify the coin master who has issued them"*[81]. This is plausible if they mean the monograms engraved outside the shield, but not to the ones on the shield's field, for the reason mentioned before: would be a sign of irreverence towards the prince and Basarab symbols.

Unlike his reticent brother, numismatic proof shows that Mircea totally reconnected with the western world to counter the Ottoman pressure. This one intensified after the Turks defeated the Serbians in the first battle of Kossovopolje (1389) and the young Sultan Bayezid had replaced father Murad I, killed in battle by the Serbian hero, Milos Obilić. From heraldic perspective, they are few points worth noting. Under Mircea the Elder we see more often how the barry field begins to change the alternance full-hollow bars with hollow-full, as in Raeskin Scoonavaer coat of arms of Gelre armorial. Moreover, the striped field begins to have a fluctuating number of bars, between 3 and 5. Engraver's haste or lack of heraldic notions led to reversal of the two fields, the dexter appearing full or occupied by some unprecedented charge, i.e. *a five-pointed star*, and the senester with 3 or 4 bars. We see these radical changes on the obverse of ducats designated by MMV site as *type II b*. In these issues, the complete arms of Basarab composed of shield, joust helmet with lambrequins and crest-bird turned towards a cross-*patée*, is surrounded by an elliptical, mixed legend, uneven as font and size.

[81] See https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_cel_Bătrân.

*1. Ducat Mircea (type II b): obverse with prince effigy, reverse with Basarab classic arms (no. 196 in MBR)*
*2. Ducat Mircea (type II b): dexter five-point star dimidiated by barry of eight (no. 200 and 222 in MBR)*
*3. Ducat Mircea associated with Michael (type II c): dexter monogram Π lying, dimidiated by eight (no. 214 in MBR) and, proof of continuity,*
*4. Ducat Michael I, dexter with monogram Π lying, dimidiated by eight (no. 225 in MBR)*

Mircea's son and associate voivode **Michael I (1418-1420)**, continued in his brief reign to struck coins, using as cadency of his shield the five-pointed star from his father's *type II b*, but also the sign who looks like a Π lying rightwards.

Each of these apparently original heraldic charges could have possible roots in the past. For example, the five-pointed star can originate from the beautiful six-ray star engraved outside the shield, in front of the helmet, on type I and III ducats issued by Vladislav I. The „stool" with legs facing shield's exterior can be in its turn a schematic engraved crescent, having as precedence the charge depicted on *type I Vlaicu* ducat. In both cases we rely on continuity of heraldic symbols already rooted, perhaps due to the use of old coins as model. This continuity would be hidden by the drop of mint engravers professionalism.

Dan I's son who interrupted Mircea's reign for just under two years, **Vlad I (1395-1397)**, called unjustly "the Usurper" by Romanian historiography[82], was the first Wallachian voivode who recognized Turkish suzerainty. He occupied the throne with Moldovan-Polish military aid, taking advantage of the outcome of the battle of Rovine between Mircea and Bayezid (17 May 1395). After huge casualties for both sides, the Turks retreated south of Danube, but the voivode was losing the support of a large number of boyars and he was forced to withdraw on his domains in Transylvania to regroup. In the Wallachian history, that moment started the throne competition between the two dynastic parties, Danesti and Draculesti, a true Balkan War of the Roses, with worse consequences for the country.

As ruler, Vlad also had the ambition to issue currency. MBR catalogue described six series of ducats in which Basarab arms are schematically engraved

[82] As legitimate son of Dan I, Vlad was according to the Wallachian law a perfectly legal throne claimant. We can argue that Mircea was the actual usurper, considering rulers' custom to associate sons as co-voivodes towards the end of life. Dan I didn't have the necessary time to do so, due to his premature death. On the other hand, early in Mircea's reign one Vlad character appear among the leading members of the Voivodal Council, possible sign of Mircea's full authority, who kept kinship close and not felt threatened by his nephew.

with three or four bars, either in right or left field. Monograms are not lacking: **K** occurs in three cases (two reverted in mirror), **M** in two, and once the monogram **X**, similar to *cross semi-anchored in saltire*. The first two are logos used during the reigns of Dan I and Mircea I, and therefore their presence suggests rather continuity in monetary activity.

*Unique-ducat of Vlad I: cross saltire dimidiated by 3 bars; reverse - mirrored K dexter to the crest (cat. no. 93 MBR)*

Vlad rushed to declare through currency his newly achieved voivodal position, individualization by cadency not being a primary concern. Probably this problem arises only later, the solution being the introduction of an interesting symbol, floral or Christian, for which we can find also a historical explanation. In prof. George Voica's interpretation of Lovişte pictograms mentioned above, the **X** represents the symbol of victory. May this unique monetary issue „publish" the successful defense of the earned position, in summer of 1396, when his uncle was trying to regain the throne with Transylvanian help? Or is just another form of divine invocation for health, luck and prosperity, as the previous **Θ** seemed to be?

Heraldist Tudor-Radu Tiron analysed and discovered on the great seal of Vlad I four small escutcheons decorating the angular areas among the beautiful lobes of one Gothic frame surrounding the state coat of arms, the recursant bird holding a cross on its back. In indicated areas the naked eye can only see the embossed outline of some small French shields. Naturally, their content can be revealed by seal's microscopical study. Anyway, the incision of beams on a 4mm shield must be challenging even for the best miniaturist engraver of the time! As Tiron observed, the engraved surfaces include one variant of Basarab House arms, *barry of six dimidiated by plain field*[83].

Why is this discovery important? Because here we have the only coat of arms of Basarab House imprinted in wax. Undoubtly is worthy to mention that this piece of sphragistics is the first great seal preserved with legend in Slavonic. Given the political circumstances, Vlad's seal was probably produced in 1395 in a workshop of the Moldavian ruler Stephen I Muşat and modelled after the great seal of Mircea the Elder, but which displayed a Latin legend.

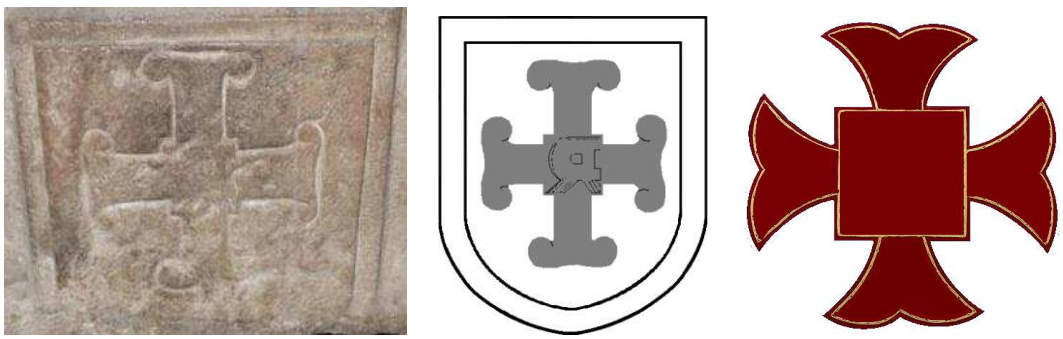
[83] Tudor-Radu Tiron, *ibid*, page 523.

*The great seal of Vlad I "the Usurper" and the position of escutcheons identified by T.-R. Tiron*

## 7. Voivodal coat of arms differing from Basarab's emblem

Besides Iohannitsa Basarab and the assuming of arms belonging to the defeated Charles Robert, the oldest supposed member of the dynasty which may have had a personal coat of arms different from the family one is just the mysterious prince buried in tomb no. 10 at Argeş. The image of this heraldic representtation is carved on the west wall of his stone sarcophagus and is blazoned as *shield displaying a cross potent-anchored nowy-quadrat, bordure plain*. Nowy-quadrat described a square knot at the intersection of cross arms.

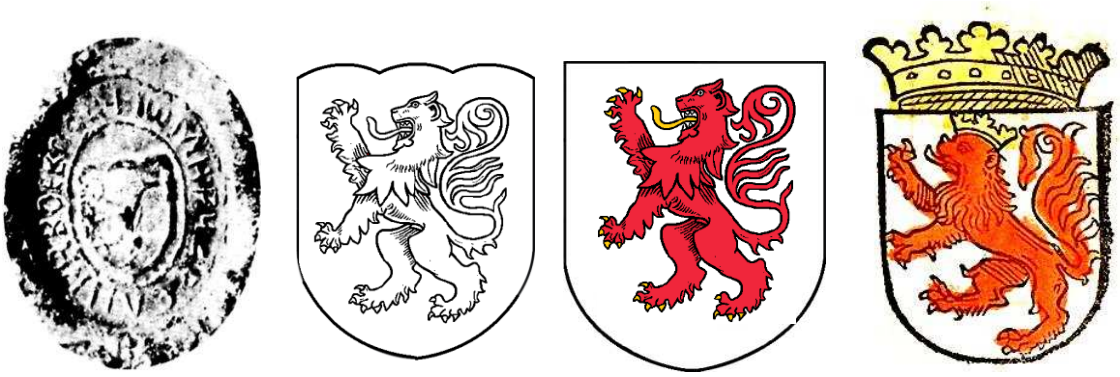
Despite of time passage and gravestone alteration, inside this square one can discern traces of an interlace pattern on which appears to be engraved a symbol resembling to Я (ia) or a stylized Slavonic monogram A. As about the cross, it is resembling to a *patée-moline* destined for archimandrites (*encolpion*).



*Prince AL...: cross potent-anchored nowy-quadrat, border plain.*
*For comparison, Greek pectoral cross for archimandrite*

Most likely, the coat of arms remembers that the late one described by the monogram **A** on the cross, consistent with AL VA rebus on the ring, was during his life a crusading warrior against pagans. Both Nicholas Alexander's anonymous brother and Andreas Lackfi, then voivode of Transylvania, took part in 1343-1345 campaigns against Tatars from Moldavia. The Slavonic monogram and the Greek resembling cross indicates however the former as the most probable occupant of the tomb.

Further, we go back to the emblem figured on the privy seal of Mircea I the Elder. Today we know that the voivode used at least in one official occasion these unique personal arms, completely different from the general line of Basarab's coat of arms. There is a vivid discussion of specialists about the origin of this heraldic symbol, found on the seal used to authenticate the treaty of alliance concluded with the Polish-Lithuanian king Vladislav II Jagiello in 1411.



*Mircea the Elder privy seal with lion rampant, possible heraldic concession from Sigismund of Luxemburg. Alongside, the coat of arms from Richental Armorial*

A shield having the chief slightly trilobate bears a heraldic beast quite hard to identify due to a weak impression in wax, most likely a lion rampant[84], surrounded by a perfect legible text † IW МНРЧА ВЕЛНКА ВОЕВОДА (Io Mircea Great Voivode). We can confirm that the image is indeed a lion rampant considering the drawing provided by Ulrich Richental in his Armorial of the Council of Constance on that *„Herczog dispott in der meren Walachy"* represented by Thobermur. The same coat of arms was introduced later as belonging to one *Wallachia minor* in the 1580's armorial of M. Schrot and A. Berg.

The most plausible origin of this uncustomary coat of arms is the heraldic lion of the House of Luxembourg, whose representative on the Hungarian throne, king Sigismund (1387-1437), was Mircea's nominal suzerain for the Wallachian fiefdoms in Transylvania and the Banate of Severin. He could theoretically confer his lion as personal arms in one of the historical moments in which the two intersected: the treaty of alliance signed in Brasov, when Mircea was seeking support to regain the throne lost to Vlad I (1395), before the crusade ended with the disaster of Nikopolis (1396), and at their last meeting, in Severin (1406).

[84] Tudor-Radu Tiron joins heraldist Dan Cernovodeanu to put an end to controversies concerning the nature of the heraldic beasts from the privy seal in his paper *Heraldica domnească şi boierească munteană la cumpăna veacurilor al XIV-lea – al XV-lea*, in Istros Magazine, XIX, 2013, Brăila, p.528-529.

The most favourable time for such a chivalrous effusion came on the first mentioned occasion. On March 7th, 1395, Mircea signed a document stating his joining, voluntarily and independently of any pressure, to the king Sigismund's planned actions to attack the Ottoman Empire and its satellites. The voivode promised his support, military and logistic, along the Danube and in Dobruja, as well as the Wallachian contribution to defend any territory, fortress, harbour and mountain pass that had to be conquered by the Christian armies. These, only if the king himself would lead the expeditions in question, namely it was a promise made at personal level, from vassal to suzerain. In this context, it would be not unthinkable that Sigismund replied to this gesture of commitment with another, bearing the same personal value: granting a heraldic concession, perhaps even in form of a signet ring engraved with House of Luxembourg's primitive arms, *lion rampant gules on shield argent*, memento of his Limbourg origins.

Fact is, Mircea justly appreciated king's gesture as a personal connection and used the lion only on his privy seal and never on the country's great seal or on any series of coins issued. The display of this heraldic beast on the occasion of his 1418 embassy to Konstanz had a well-targeted significance. It was a gentle reminder meant to speak to the emperor of their old ties of chivalresque communion in a difficult time of the bilateral relationship, time in which these ties seemed forgotten. Undoubtedly, the story of this high-level chivalrous moment in Brasov must have travelled from one noble court to another, eventually reaching Richental, who dutifully noted it in his armorial.

From voivode **Dan II (1420-1431)**, son of Dan I, we have to date 5 version of silver *ducats* bearing the classical Basarab coat of arms (in 3 variants) and inversed fields (2 variants), described by C. Moisil, O. Iliescu and E. Isăcescu[85]. They were inventoried also two series of billon *bani* showing on a French shield placed under heraldic crown a new charge, a *cross* described as *anchored* in the MBR catalogue.

*Dan II: Anepigraphic billon ban blazoned with shield superposed by crown and cross anchored*

[85] Octavian Iliescu, *Ducaţi necunoscuţi emişi de doi voievozi ai Ţării Româneşti în secolul al XV-lea (Unknown ducats issued by two Wallachian voivodes in the 15th century)*, in Bulletin of Romanian Numismatic Society, year 77-79 (1983-1985), page 260 (on internet at www.snr-1903.ro).

At first glance, we suspect that this divisional coins made from a poor silver-copper (billon) alloy were ordered by Dan II abroad. The symbol specific to the crusading orders claiming their origin from Jerusalem is leading us to the Sibiu Transylvanian mint, headed in that time by Nikolaus Redwitz, head of the Teutonic Order in Hungary. Moreover, the issue was originally assigned by Hungarian numismatist László Réthy to this prominent character who enjoyed the confidence of king Sigismund and who, between 1429-1435, fulfilled for the Hungarian kingdom important military-administrative functions: captain and then Ban of Severin[86], count of the royal mint from Sibiu (*camararum monete regalis Cibiniensis Comes*), and count of the Transylvanian salt mines.

But the historical situation was more complex. The silhouette engraved on the billon coin's obverse cannot be either the chief of the Teutonic Commandery in Hungary, nor Jesus Christ as king of the world. There is featured a worldly ruler carrying sceptre and orb, not a knight-monk who renounced his worldly possessions for fighting the infidels in order to gain eternal life. In addition, the shield on the reverse is bearing a crown above, heraldic symbol of sovereignty, which Teutons of Severin did not have. If we set this truth, why however a cross-bearing shield appears on a Wallachian coin? We propose two possible explanations.

The first is linked to the historical context in which the youngest son of Dan I pursued his agitated reign. He ascended the throne with the help of Sultan Mehmed Celebi, which he accompanied in his campaign north of Danube from 1420. Sigismund of Luxembourg being busy with the Bohemian Hussites, the voivode received the blessing of the Hungarian king as part of his armistice concluded with the Turks. In October 1422, the voivode changed sides and asked the emperor for help preserving his throne, announcing himself for the first time as a firm supporting pillar of Christendom against Turkish aggression and, speaking of trading privileges renewal for the merchants of Brasov, asked for permission to issue coinage. Interested in having a committed fighter in his anti-Ottoman alliance, Sigismund approved the requests (the mint only in 1424) and commissioned the great general Filipo Scolari (Pippo de Ozora), count of Temes and military leader of the South-Eastern Hungarian frontier, to support the Wallachian prince.

The two, together with prince Fruzhin, the last claimant of the Bulgarian throne, also on the pay check of the Hungarian king, have managed to defeat the Ottoman armies in a least three occasions (1425). Yet victories did not secure too much Dan II's position, which he continued to dispute with his cousin, Radu II

[86] Banate reoccupied by Hungarians in 1419, after voivode Michael I's death, who did not encompass the Severin fortress hinterland (today's Mehedinţi county), but rather corresponded to the southern half of today's Romanian Banate (Caraş-Severin and Timiş counties).

said *Praznaglava* ("Naked head"). After Scolari's death in 1426, the Romanian voivode challenged the Turkish might twice, at the latter participating alongside king Sigismund on the siege of Golubac fortress in Serbia, in 1428. On this occasion he proved his outstanding military skills, secured the respect of his suzerain and nearly three years of peace from the Ottoman Empire. Dan was already an important pawn of the Christian front organized by Hungary. By fortifying fortresses on the Danube line and the planned settlement of Teutonic knights in the Banate of Severin, a defensive form of European Crusade was outlined, and the river started to be the border between the Christianity and Islam.

It is possible that in these political circumstances the voivode have assumed on his own initiative the crusading arms, a symbol of his dedication to the cause of Christianity. If so, then the presence of Nikolaus von Redwitz around is just a coincidence, and we assist again to a monetary "advertisement" of a cardinal event in the Wallachian voivode's life: the joining to the crusade promoted by king Sigismund. Researchers Elena Isăcescu and Ana-Maria Velter assume that these billon coins were intended to circulate in the Banate of Severin after obtaining on November 10th, 1424 the royal privilege of coin minting as part of the Hungarian-Wallachian trade agreement[87]. This would mean that the visual message was intended primarily to sensitize the money users under Hungarian crown, to raise their awareness and reassure them about the intensity of Dan voivode's anti-Ottoman commitment.

A second explanation is linked to the major political influence of Redwitz in the region and to the presumption that he still had to do with the issuance of these monetary series since 1429, when he took over the mint in Sibiu. MMV portal inventoried no less than 24 variants of billon *ban*. If we consider the short interval of only a year and a half between the Teutonic knights installation and the death in battle of Dan II, seems plausible the idea of partial concession of the billon's issue towards the Transylvanian mint, either as a debt, i.e. payment for the mercenary from Sibiu who insured his permanent protection since 1426, or as a joint coin's production authorized for circulation in both countries, due to the on-going application of the monetary convention concluded with king Sigismund. The Romanian voivode would have been in this way the titular issuer without being directly involved in minting, and the idea of using the cruciate coat of arms on the reverse may belong to the Teutonic head of the mint.

It is however hard to believe that Dan would have given up so munificently to such an important privilege. Evidence is the economic conflict triggered by the billon ban in the era. A very large amount of low value money was struck, determining the Brasov merchants to protest to the king, even refusing to use in

[87] Octavian Iliescu, *op.cit*, page 261 (on internet on the site www.snr-1903.ro).

transactions any of Dan's Wallachian currency. If the issuer were Redwitz, probably the Saxons would not have been so drastic. In addition, the shape of the cross differs substantially from those engraved on contemporary Teutonic coins struck in Prussia (simple Latin cross inscribed in French shield). Despite financial embargo, the mint continued to strike the billon *ban* some years after the premature death of voivode, perhaps even until the reign of Vlad II Draco, the very man who hastened his end. Interestingly, a crusader's cross on a crowned shield was used also on coins issued in Moldavia not long afterwards, in billon and in silver, by voivode Peter III Aron (1451-1452 and 1454-1457).

Worthy of mention, Dan II sealed the year's 1423 privilege for the Brasov merchants with a privy seal, maybe a signet ring. It presents the affronted busts of two crowned silhouettes: a feminine figure at field's dexter and a masculine one at senester, surrounded by an illegible legend[88]. A similar heraldic composition first appeared on a seal of Mircea I (1403) and will continue to be used by voivodes, evolving gradually in what V. A. Urechia named *„Nova plantatio" seal*. It is hard to say who would be the two figures on Dan II's seal, but suspicion is turning to voivode's parents, Dan I and Maria Branković of Serbia.

After the troubled reign of **Alexandru Aldea (1431-1436)**, member of Draculesti dynastic line, from which we have not preserved any form of heraldry, another natural son of Mircea the Elder took the throne of Wallachia, **Vlad II the Devil/Draco (1436-1442** and **1443-1447)**. Claimant kept by king Sigismund as a backup option in case Dan II had yielded to the Turkish pressure, Vlad failed to occupy his father's position when his Danesti cousin died, because the Princely Council elected his older stepbrother Aldea instead. As reassurance, Vlad was officially recognized in Nuremberg as *dominus*/prince of Transalpine Wallachia, knighted within the Order of the Dragon (established in 1408), and assigned the responsibility to organize in Transylvania the defense of the Hungarian kingdom's Eastern flank. He was to wait for a more favourable moment to enter the country as voivode. Therefore, in the period 1431-1436 he resided in Segesvár/ Sighişoara, where among other things he created his own mint. He issued billon *bani* bearing a dragon destined for circulation in Transylvania and neighbouring countries. The surname *Devil/Draco* is linked to the image of the dragon, given that members were required to expose the Order's heraldic insignia, usually on the chest or shoulder.

[88] Image took from the excellent blog of Maria Roşu, *Istorie povestită* (http://asztrorege.blogspot.ro/2010/11/dan-voievod-i.html).

*Reverse of the ban with dragon issued by Vlad II Draco at Sighişoara (drawing in the middle taken from MBR)*

Vlad II was a typical example of medieval knight proud and warlike, with an uncertain religious attitude. He was married to an Orthodox princess, the daughter of voivode Elias of Moldavia. Despite the privileged relationship he had with king Sigismund and other prominent members of the Dragon (Vladislav Jagiello, Stefan Lazarevic, Pippo de Ozora, Stibor of Stiboricz), he followed his own politi-cal agenda, which stridently opposed on several occasions to the Order statutes and his suzerain's vision. Apparently he saw the lack of support for the throne in 1431 as an unforgivable affront and never felt satisfied enough with the compensation offered by the king.

Thus, only a year after taking the oath as member of the Order, which involved the fight against Turks and protecting the Christians, Vlad was accused of an incredible feat: he would personally guided a Turkish army on Severin fortress, which they finally conquered and killed the entire Teutonic garrison. Following these events, commander Redwitz took refuge west to Caransebes castle, for never leaving it until the definitive withdrawal of the Teutonic Order from Banate (1435). For this accusation, a few years later Vlad was expelled from the Order of the Dragon. Before exclusion, however, in that year 1436 when rival Alexandru Aldea died (apparently of illness, not in battle), he achieved the position of Transalpina's voivode, with the consent of king Sigismund and also with the tacit approval of Sultan Murad II.

After the death of his direct suzerain in December 1437 the voivode considered himself released from his oath as knight of the Dragon, turning to an independent policy, of national interest, worthy of the 1440 proud *titulus*: *"I, in Christ the God good faithful, good righteous and of God lover and God's anointed and single ruler, Io Vlad, voivode and lord of all the land of Wallachia, ruling also until the Great Sea and ruling also in the Hungarian parts, duke of Amlas and Făgăraş"*[89].

An independent policy involved in that historical moment a wise approach to the Ottoman power. From this point onward began the conflict between Vlad

[89] *Documenta Romaniæ Historica*, series B Wallachia, vol. I, doc. 91, pp. 157-159.

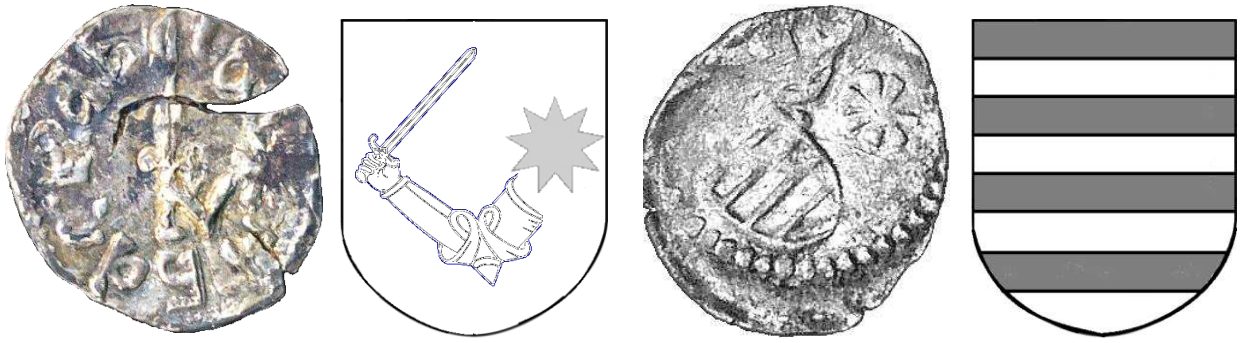
and Iancu of Hunedoara (John Hunyadi), the military leader of the anti-Ottoman coalition in Europe, resulting in gestures of overt hostility, such as the blitz-campaign in southern Transylvania where Vlad accompanied the Turks (1438). In response, Iancu, *the king maker*, ousted him from the throne, and replacing with Basarab II (1442). After a reinstallation negotiated by the Turks and Hungarians, Vlad changed political direction and joined the alliance against the Ottomans. But he retained his independence of action, refusing to take part personally in the crusading campaign of Vladislaus Jagiello and Iancu in 1444, considering it for good reason as having not a single chance of success. *"The Turk is going hunting with more men than your lordship have gathered here"* – he reportedly said with bitter reproach to Iancu, but nevertheless he dispatched the country's best cavalry unit led by his son, teenager Mircea II. Crusader's too small army (around 20.000) was annihilated by Turks near Varna harbour and the young king Vladislaus lost his life. Instead, Vlad willingly joined the next year Burgundian-Papal project, adding 5000 of his well-trained cavalry to the naval campaign on Danube, carried by Wallerand of Wavrin. He regained from the enemy the strategic Giurgiu fortress, built by Mircea I and lost by Dan II.

It is very possible that a tumultuous reign didn't allow him the respite to issue another currency besides billon *bani*[90], depriving us from answering the question whether the one surnamed *Draco* ever used as personal arms the classic Basarab emblem, or kept only the dragon up to his abrupt life end. With or without the dragon on his chest, he was killed in 1447 by a group of boyars led by Albu Vornik, at John Hunyadi's instigation.

**Basarab II (1442-1443)** was the son of the brave prince and soldier Dan II. For a decade, he has been formed as young knight at the Hungarian court, completing his military training besides king Albert of Habsburg and John Hunyadi. He participated in campaigns against Hussites and Turks and he was the claimant who took the place of Vlad II Draco when geopolitical interests of the anti-Ottoman alliance required it. Afterwards he disappeared from history, if he was not somehow that *unfaithful Basmara* mentioned by chronicler Mustafa Ali, reinstalled on the throne by Iancu after Vlad II Draco's murder (1447), and dead in the Battle of Kossovopolje in 1448. Fact is that in 1442, when Hunyadi punished Vlad II for attacking Făgăraş, Basarab II was the substitute at hand from Danesti stock. Perhaps his political mentor saw him not only as voivode of circumstance, but his political destiny was as such.

[90] On July 3, 1443 after taking the throne again Vlad II Draco wrote to the Braşov Council that he will limit the exit of silver currency from the country until *„my new ducats will go out"*, according to Ioan Bogdan, *Relaţiile Ţării Româneşti cu Braşovul şi Ungaria (Relationships of Wallachia with Brasov and Hungary)*, Bucharest, 1902, p.52, doc. XLIX. No copy of this announced monetary issue reached us to date.

In his ephemeral reign, Basarab II was able to issue currency, leaving behind a heraldic inheritance too. Octavian Iliescu has documented the existence of two versions of silver *ducats*, probably belonging both to a single issue. The layouts, although slightly different, are similar and have interesting engravings. Thus, the obverse is charged with an emblem reminding of prince's Hungarian period: *arm embowed in armour (*fr. *dextrochère armé), issuing from the sinister side of the shield from an eight-ray star*[91]. As heraldic symbol the arm represents the unblemished honour of a character coming from an illustrious family (the star)[92].



*Basarab II: Obverse with arm embowed in armor issung from star and reverse with shield barry of eight pieces under a bird facing an eight-ray star (two variants of bani, cf. Octavian Iliescu)*

The Slavonic legend describes †IW БАСРАБ (Io Basrab) and gives a hint of the mint, which should be the one at Argeş. The embowed arm, either unframed by a shield, is having all data to be considered a coat of arms. Although so far no grant for these arms has been found, it could be obtained as heraldic concession from the Hungarian suzerain kings, Albert or Vladislaus, directly or by his protector Iancu, voivode of Transylvania.

Apart of the armoured arm embowed, who resides in the 15th century Hungarian heraldic tradition (i.e. Both de Banya, Orbán de Lengyelfalva, Pavel Kinis, or Transylvanians Barcsai, Bocskay, Tivadar de Rogna, Damó de Lisznyó, Kun de Ozsdola), the issuing senester star warns the viewer on the might of the bearer's originating noble house. In this world of chivalry, conferring personal coat of arms to deserving youth, necessary political pawns in building a Christian alliance against the Ottoman Empire, was on the current agenda. As it happened with Vlad II and Vlad III, invited in turn to join the Order of the Dragon, probably the youngest son of Dan II received too from his suzerain a set of heraldic symbols. Thus, through Hungarian heraldry, European noble houses received in their ranks the young Romanian, taking note of his personal valour and princely ancestry.

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[91] A good number of noble families from Transylvania, Hungarians, Szeklers, Saxons and Romanians, bore as concession this bowed arm.

[92] L. Foulques-Delanos, *Manuel heraldique ou Clef de l'art du blason*, (Avertissement), Limoges, oct. 1816.

On coin's reverse there is a unique coat of arms. If we consider the thinning of the upper bar until identification with the chief, tendency observed on some monetary issues of voivodes Radu I and Vlad I, this one may be blazoned as *French shield barry of eight pieces*. Above stands a barely visible piece, which could be a helmet with lambrequins or a senester oriented bird towards an eight-ray star. Octavian Iliescu considers this shield as bearing the old Arpadian arms of Hungary, *"an obvious marking of vassalage relations with the kingdom of Hungary"*[93]. If on the obverse was not depicted that embowed arm issuing from the sun, numismatist conclusion would be difficult to refute. But the presence of this possible concession coat of arms, be it unframed by shield, just like the dragon on the Vlad II coins, radically change the symbolism and provides another perspective on the reverse's striped shield.

According to the layout rules of a medieval coin, the reverse shows an image related to religion or the issuer's patron, earthly or spiritual. The arms in question does not possess the descriptive elements of a spiritual patron, and neither of the three political patrons of the Wallachian voivode, kings Albert and Vladislaus II, or voivode Iancu had as blazon a shield entirely with stripes. As for the Arpadian arms alluded by prof. Iliescu, it disappeared as stand-alone coat of arms and was since over a century part of the marshalled arms of the foreign kings who ruled the Hungarian kingdom. It is true that one of Hungary's greatest rulers, Sigismund of Luxembourg, had had the imperial caprice to use, not more than a generation before, the Arpadian shield barry of eight alone on the reverse of a thick silver dinar, but it was an exception among those marshalled Hungary-Germany and Hungary-Bohemia.

On the other hand, could be the Hungarian burely arms conferred as augmentation to a young claimant to the Wallachian throne? In principle yes, but only as reward for exceptional actions or military deeds. No doubt, if such things had happened, the Western chronicles, hungry of chivalrous gestures, would not hesitate to inform us. Anyway, the young prince could not have two different concession arms in the same time.

If not the three leaders of Hungary, then who would be the source-patron of monetary blazon from which Basarab would have revendicated himself? Could he be that Basarab paternal ancestor, the anonymous *"Roi de blaqe"* from Wijnbergen armorial, member of the Asenid imperial family fled north of Danube? Or the Shishmanid Tsars related to his namesake Basarab I? In both cases, the coat of arms barry of eight pieces instead of twelve and the abandon of the dimidiated shield represents a synthesis of Asenid and Basarab arms, families last related by

[93] În the study of Vasile Mărculeţ, *Consideraţii asupra domniei antiotomane a lui Basarab II (Considerations on the anti-Ottoman rule of Basarab II)*, published în *Buletinul Muzeului militar naţional Regele Ferdinand I*, new series, n0.9, Ed. Alpha MDN, Bucharest, 2011, pg. 12.

marriage during the reigns of Vladislav I Vlaicu and John Sracimir, the last Tsar of Badin[94], but also a genuine escutcheon of pretence over one Bulgarian territory seized by the Turks and owned previously by his ancestors, probably Badin.

We already know that young Basarab II evolved in the chivalrous environment specific to the court of Buda and in Hungary's military campaigns. He was always been surrounded by Hungarian, Polish, German or Italian nobles which exhibit complicated arms on their colourful shields and banners, each blazon telling stories of bravery, importance and richness of those foreigner's ancestors full of vanity and courage. We can also assume that he accessed heraldic information from historical manuscripts as part of his education as knight and prince.

We do not know when, maybe finding the work of the French herald from 1280, or discussing with prince Fruzhin, brother-in-arms of his father, but clearly under the visual pressure of the armigers surrounding him in his teens, Dan II's son felt the need to make public his noble imperial ancestry. Once on the throne (1442), he „advertised" on his coins besides the conceded arms **an escutcheon of Bulgarian imperial pretence**, arrived maybe as reason and opportunity after the withdrawal from the political life of elder Bulgarian claimant Frujin in the city of Brasov. The mark of the illustrious family is heraldically reinforced by the eight-ray star, beautifully engraved on the left side of the shield.

In this vision, the coin's symbolism is unitary. Read from the obverse, it says: *"I belong to the Christian anointed prince Basarab* (Slavonic legend)*, man with unblemished honour* (arm embowed with sword)*, scion of a family illustrious in arms* (eight-ray star) *from the blood of Bulgarian emperors* (shield burely) *and voivode of Wallachia* (recursant bird)*"*. As for the senester plain field absence, dimidiation interpreted by us as heraldic pretention over Severin, the office of Ban was held then by his political patron, Hunyadi, and such affront was unconceivable, even by engraving a pretence on currency.

## 8. Kossovopolje moment. Crescent's victory over the star

**Vladislav II (1447-1456)** ascended the throne of Wallachia after a series of painful defeats of a much too divided Christendom, in a booming age of the Ottoman Empire who was preparing for the conquest of Constantinople. Since that time, the Turks will have an increasingly decisive word in Balkan policy, including the involvement in throne succession of the Wallachian voivodes. Who was the new prince of Argeş? Romanian historiography hesitates, not finding his

[94] John Sracimir belonged to Shishmanid House, scions of Asenids through women: despot Shishman of Badin, the forefather of this imperial House, married the daughter of Ana-Theodora Asenina, on her turn daughter of Tsar John Asen II.

place in Basarab genealogy. Maybe he was a brother of Basarab II, recommended in 1437 by Hunyadi to Brasov's leaders as *Ladislaus Walachus*? Or Basarab's nephew, offspring of Danciu, the other son of voivode Dan II? Data from the era are few, vague and contradictory.

We know that Vladislav II accompanied his political chief Iancu in the campaign ended in defeat on Serbian soil, at Kossovopolje, then he became involved along his kin, despot George Branković, in the peace talks between Hungary and Turkey. He agreed to pay tribute in exchange of Turkish recognition as voivode of Wallachia. This multilateral treaty signed only in 1451 at Adrianople promoted Vladislav II as *"illustris Radozla waywoda Transalpinus"* who had mandate to speak on behalf of the Governor of Hungary[95], and led decisively towards the Wallachian entrance in the sphere of control of the Ottoman Empire, be it honourably, while preserving state autonomy.

Iancu knew he could rely during the long negotiations on the loyalty and superior wit proved by his protégé, who once installed on the throne fully put his qualities in his country's service. He was the first prince who tried to modernize the ancestral set of unwritten laws, *jus valahicum*, introducing new ones from a selection of Byzantine codices which he compiled in a manuscript called the "Zakonik of Târgovişte". In the same time, he managed to rebalance country's economy with a fiscal and monetary reform. He gave up the weight system of 1.05 grams *grossi* used since Vladislav I Vlaicu and took over the Turkish system of silver *aspron* of 1.21 grams issued by Sultan Murad II. While he stroke two types of coins, ducats and bani, as Dan I did before, numismatist G. Buzdugan believes this reform started ever since. Reality is that only Vladislav II gave a clear metrological equivalence with the Turkish monetary system, one *aspron* being equal to two Wallachian *ducats*, and four *bani*.

From heraldic perspective, MBR catalogue lists seven variants of ducats and one of bani engraved with coat of arms on the obverse. MMV site adds two new issues, one ducat and one ban variant, bearing heraldic symbols slightly different from those in the catalogue. We will follow them in turn, believing that also at Vladislav II we may comment a major political paradigm change, highlighted by symbols applied on monetary issues.

The first series of ducats and bani must have occurred not long after the enthronement carried out with the support of Hunyadi. Both coins issued then should clearly indicate the status of vassalage with Hungary and the subordination to Iancu, its governor and *factotum* since 1446. Therefore, we believe that his first issue was the one described by Bogdan Costin in MMV. On the ducat's

[95] Letter of John Hunyadi to Brasov leaders dated December 17, 1449, analyzed by Ştefan Andreescu in *Vlad Ţepeş Dracula. Între legendă şi adevăr istoric (Vlad the Impaler Dracula. Between legend and historical truth)*, text digitized by County Library Mureş, page18.

obverse appears a shield with two bars dimidiated by (what seems to be) a fleur-de-lys, and on the ban the same emblem bears a clumsy cross potence which may symbolize Vladislav II's status of member of the Crusading alliance led by Hunyadi[96].

*(Probable) Vladislav II: Obverse of a ducat and a ban, two bars dimidiated by a fleur-de-lys, above a cross potence. Coat of arms similar with type I Vladislav I Vlaicu (Bogdan Costin, MMV)*

The ducat's die engraving is made by a less gifted craftsman, but behind failed shapes we can glimpse the guiding pattern. It is the ducat *type I Vladislav I Vlaicu*, the one who marked in our view the foundation of the second Orthodox Metropolitan See in Wallachia. We see the same clear two bars, the same cross potence above the shield, the same two concentric circles with carefully carved globes. Of course, the religious sense turned to the second Vladislav in *crusader prince*, but according to our interpretation he did not hesitate to „publish" his dynastic legitimacy directly from his eponymous great-uncle, with which he hopes to compare. As the heraldic charge in the senester field, it is also a cadency, known to us since Radu I. Although the Angevin dynasty had passed away, we can assert that after more than a century of use, the heraldic lily could still symbolize the Hungarian crown and the subordination of Wallachia Transalpina towards the realm, whose authoritarian representative was John Hunyadi. The same was true at that time in the personal arms of Moldavian rulers Alexander I the Good, Elias, Stephen II, Peter II and Alexander II.

We may place the following monetary issues (at least seven after MBR inventory) towards the end of warlike agitation years, probable after the conclusion of the Adrianople Treaty (1451). Prince's desire to be compared to his illustrious namesake and ancestor appears in the superior quality of the new ducats, far better than he and his predecessors issued before, both in terms of graphics and centred striking. It seemed that Vladislav II managed to secure the services of a skilful engraver, whose „hand" is observed in certain execution mannerisms occurring also on coins issued by subsequent throne occupants. Also, in Slavonic legend appears for the first time **гнъ** as abbreviation of **господинъ** (gospodinî = lord, *dominus*).

[96] Bogdan Costin don't exclude as coin's issuer the voivode Vlad II Draco in his Transylvanian period. See *O serie monetară necunoscută a Ţării Româneşti din secolul al XV-lea, atribuită voievodului Vladislav al II-lea*, page 6, on site monederomanesti.cimec.ro.

*Wallachian ducat type I Vladislav II (no. cat. 256 cf. MBR)*

This time the dimidiated coat of arms is reversed, having the cadency in the dexter field, and the senester field is clearly barry of six pieces. The new master engraver gave up beams, the unaesthetic heraldic stammering shown on Mircea the Elder, Vlad I and Michael I coinage. As cadency Vladislav chose a more complex design, consisting of two overlapped symbols: a crescent and a six-ray star. We noted earlier the double meaning of the star, belonging to an illustrious family and a traditional solar symbol in the area inhabited by Romanians. The accuracy of layout execution denotes the intention to „advertise" a certain action or political event.

The moment of this ducats' issue being established, the referred event can only be the Wallachia's submission as vassal to the Ottomans. The proper crescent is no longer the emblem of Byzantium, as to Vladislav I Vlaicu, but marks directly the favourite Muslim symbol. The interpretation of the two heraldic charges as dissemination of a tragic information who says *"Romanian bowed to the Turk"* is supported by later issues of Vlad III the Impaler, Radu III the Handsome, Basarab III Laiota and Basarab IV Tepelus[97], all four being either installed on the throne by the Turks or submitting to them at some point. There is no coincidence the fact that their arms appear constantly with the same two symbols, superimposed in the same order.

Vladislav II has issued a variant of ducats with crescent and six-ray star, probably towards the end of his reign, in which the symbols' order is changed: the star appears above the Turkish crescent. This seeming layout mistake is actually intentional, as political and propagandistic message in the context of subsequent events:

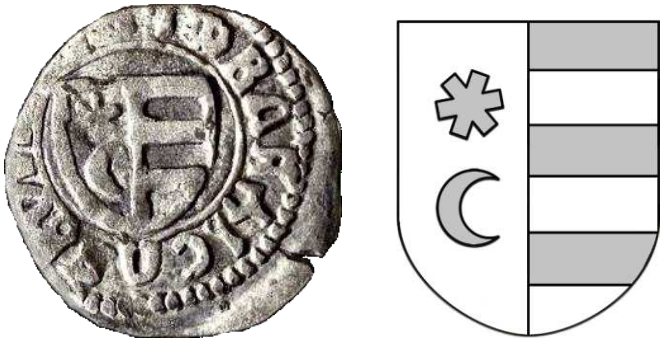
1453 – the seizure of Amlas duchy by governor Iancu and the fall of Constantinople,

1455 – the seizure of Făgăraş duchy by the same Iancu, and

1456 – the uprising of the Orthodox Romanians in Transylvania, who responded to the forced conversion imposed by ultra-Catholic magnates Garai and Ujlaki and instrumented by Osvald of Rozgony.

[97] To the latter it's attributed a ducat of billon. See Octavian Iliescu, *op.cit.*, page274 and photo page 275 (www.snr-1903.ro).

Vladislav's reaction to obvious unfriendly gesture of Hungarians and Saxons towards both his fellow Romanians and feudal interests across the Carpathians was harsh and swift. In 1453 he attacked and torched Sibiu, the new owner of Amlas. In winter 1455-56 he probably attacked Bran castle near Brasov, and in 1456 tried unsuccessfully to recover Făgăraş fortress, on the way devastating the Saxon villages near Olt River. During this time and historical circumstances, he stroke a single variant of ducats with inverted cadency, „publishing" a heraldic rebus to his Christian neighbours who suspected him to completely abandoned the anti-Ottoman cause: *„the Romanian has not died, but is still capable to pursue his own interests (the star above) while is still fighting in the name of Constantinople (crescent reversed below)".*



*Wallachian ducat type II Vladislav II (no. cat. 262 in MBR)*

Military retaliation against his political patron has been fatal for Vladislav. Besides being a severe and merciless soldier, Iancu was the lucid puppeteer who had always near him a claimant ready to occupy Transalpina's throne. He empowered young Vlad III the Impaler to take by sword his father Vlad II Draco's legacy. Taking advantage of Transylvanian military resources and the betrayal of some Wallachian boyars, he entered the country under the heavenly sign of Halley comet in the early summer of 1456, captured and killed Vladislav II at Targsor.

Dan, the son of the murdered, called by historians *the Claimant*, waited in Brasov for a favourable moment to overthrown Vlad III. Financially and military supported by Saxons from Brasov, he rewarded them with a trading privilege in March 1460, just before entering the country with a band of boyars and mercenaries to play his fate. This document was sealed with a signet-ring. Unfortunately, the impression is unclear, which don't give us the chance to see the arms bore by the Claimant. After a brief and bloody skirmish waged in April, Dan was captured by the Impaler, sharing his father's fate, not before being asked to dig his grave and to witness his own funeral service.

Vladislav II's monetary reform legacy was preserved by the one who took his life, and by the next three voivodes. The Basarab coat of arms in the form of double cadency (crescent-star) created by the father of the *Zakonik of Târgovişte*

will continue to shine on the obverse of Wallachia's deniers for another quarter of century, on rulers from both dynastic branches. Afterwards, the Basarab arms seem to be discontinued from use, with any kind of cadency on any epigraphic or documentary vestige, although the dynasty extinction (including its collaterals) would happen almost two hundred years later.

**Vlad III the Impaler (1448, 1456-1462, 1476)** has received his reign confirmation from Sultan Mehmed II Fatih, the conqueror of Constantinople, in autumn 1456. For five years he maintained good relations with the Turks, paying the tribute in the first two, then claiming for the next three the non-payment by country's depleting because of the conflicts with Transylvanians. The Sultan, occupied with an unrest in the Asian part of his empire, chose to believe him.

By the meritorious contribution of Octavian Iliescu, today we know that Vlad III minted around 1456-1461 at least one series of silver *ducats* and one series of anepigraphic *bani* using his predecessor's coat of arms, symbol of obedience to the Crescent. Then he started the open fight with the immense Muslim power and no longer had the time to change it. The issuer and the probable time of *ban* issuance were established after the exciting effigy on the reverse, which is a star with a tail. The numismatist identified it as Halley comet at its appearance in summer of 1456, cosmic spectacle held around the same time of Impaler's throne acquisition, worthy of being commemorated on a coin as heavenly sign of victory[98].

Here is yet another confirmation of the assertion from the beginning, that currency was for the Wallachian princes an ideal background for propaganda, keeping in collective memory the crucial events that marked their reign using heraldic symbols interpreted in a specific manner, as rebuses comprehensible to currency users of the time.

*Interesting denomination of ban showing the star with tail, cosmic sign who marked the beginning of Vlad III the Impaler's reign*

Offending his southern overlord and lacking military support from the north, The Impaler had to leave eventually. Retired to Brasov, he was arrested by king Matthias Corvinus who arrived in the region for a possible armed interven-

[98] Octavian Iliescu, *op.cit.*, page 271 (on-line on site www.snr-1903.ro).

tion but giving up supporting Vlad due to the libellous Saxon accusations of treachery. The king arrested and kept him prisoner for ten years, then releasing him only to use his military qualities.

The substitute brought by the army of Mehmet II, his brother **Radu III the Handsome (1462-1475)**, was accepted by boyars who, part from fear, part from desire of peace with the Turks, abandoned Vlad. Radu has not changed anything in his reign's ducats graphics, marked by struggles coming from Stephen the Great's Moldavia, who wished as anti-Ottoman ally the son of Dan II, Basarab III Laiota. During one of the military confrontations between the two princes (1473), Radu's daughters had become captives of the Moldovan. Despite enmity with the father, Stephen married in 1480 the youngest daughter, beautiful Maria Voykitza (c.1463-1511). From this matrimonial alliance apparently originates the sinople-gold striped emblem painted in the second quarter of Stephen's voivodal coat of arms mentioned in the third chapter. Their son Bogdan became ruler of Moldavia after his father's death.

Despite the short intervals in which he led Wallachia, **Basarab III Laiota (1473, 1474, 1475-1477)** has done his duty as voivode and prince by minting coin. MBR catalogues two issues: first, *type I-a* with five variants, blazoned as *crescent over a seven-ray star dimidiated by barry of six*, and the second, *type I-b* with *two variants, barry of six dimidiated by crescent over star*. O. Iliescu assign the second issue to the throne's successor, **Basarab IV Tepelus (1477-1481, 1481-1482)**, son of Basarab II and Basarab III's nephew.

*The coat of arms with double cadency at Vladislav II's successors:*
*1. Vlad III: Ducat with legend +IW ВЛАДЪ ВОНВОДА ГНЪ (cf. Bogdan Costin)*
*2. Radu III: Ducat with legend +IW РАДV ВОНВОДА ГНЪ (nr. cat. 264 cf. MBR)*
*3. Basarab III: Ducat with legend +IW БАСАРАВОВД (nr. cat. 267 cf. MBR)*
*4. Basarab IV: Ducat of billon with striped field first, legend +IW БАСАРА ВОIВ (cf. O. Iliescu)*

The eight decade of the 15th century was very turbulent for Wallachia, with no less than thirteen moments of reign's change. Turkish, Transylvanian and Moldavian neighbours were permanently involved in country's internal politics, which resulted largely in unchanged preservation of heraldic insignia on coins. The mint of Argeş apparently worked only by economic order, without personal

involvement of voivodes in the artistic part of the phenomenon, being too busy with political activities meant to secure the throne.

After Basarab IV Tepelus reign, the House of Basarab coat of arms has not appeared either on coins or other support that come to us so far. The reason for this abandonment remains a mystery of history that has never been satisfactorily explained. A formal ban from the Ottoman suzerain to use Basarab heraldry has not been yet documented. It's worth noticing how later on, some distant descendants of the first Basarab display publicly the main dynastic name as cognomen as soon as they obtain the throne. We will see this urge later at Wallachian rulers from the 16th until 18th century (Neagoe, Matei, Constantin). It is understandable and somehow similar to the gesture made by the late Tsars of the Asenid empire and their need of legitimation within the dynastic establishment. But strange enough, the well-educated Wallachian princes remained completely blind towards the legitimacy offered by Basarab heraldic component and preferred to take over as personal arms straight the emblem of the country. It is evidence that in time, the significance of the heraldic symbols on the family's first shields and the value of the unbroken preservation of the herb's ancestors vanished from the offspring's memory.

## 9. Conclusions

We showed in this study that the first Wallachian ruling House coat of arms can be linked with some historical facts that suggests a blood relation with the imperial Asen dynasty through kenezial and voivodal families mentioned in Diploma of the Johannites. Negru voivode from Făgăraş would not have such success in his attempt to unify the pre-state formations south of Carpathians if, apart from the support of the Mongol Emir Nogai, would not have the backing of these local leaders, descendants of Seneslav, Lytvoy and Barbath. It is sufficient reason to believe that they were related with them by past Transcarpathian marriages, the area of interference being most likely the Haţeg Country, where the name Basarab survived at least until the 15th century.

A key figure of this kinship relation is in our opinion Barbath, successor of Lytvoy, mentioned only once in a Hungarian document in 1285. Through the connection with Lytvoy's family must inherited Tatomir, future Radu Negru the Dismounter, the striped coat of arms of Asen marshalled with the despot's azure, or to be augmented through acts of bravery and wisdom during the state coagulation process, like it was the Severin absorption.

Iohannitsa Basarab I united his political destiny with Shishman imperial family by giving daughter Teodora in marriage and fighting along them against the Greeks (1324) and the Serbians (1330). Although the historical evidence is

indirect, 1324 could be the year of a heraldic augmentation of Asenid stripes bored by Basarabs (gold-gules) by Shishmanid ones (gold-sinople), colours appearing in tomb no. 10 at Curtea de Argeş about four decades later. There is the presumably resting place of Basarab I's second son, probably one Aldea, Alexander or Albu, recurrent names in House of Basarab's pantheon, worn by a voivode (Alexander II Aldea), a voivode's brother (Aldea, brother of Mircea I)[99], and boyars claiming voivodal ancestry (i.e. Albu Vornik, called „the Great").

The Basarab House's arms evolved over time also under the influence of Central-European chivalry, due to vassalage relationship with the Hungarian kingdom, first under Anjou dynasty, then the Habsburgs and Jagiellons. The main reason for keeping in touch with Hungary during the 14th century was the maintaining of the Transylvanian lands which Basarabs did not conceived to abandon. It was not until the next century when arise the question of building up a common front against the new enemy on the Danube banks, an alliance that the Hungarian crown and the feudal mentality in general did not conceived carried out under conditions of political equality.

We identified the three possible heraldic ways in which the coat of arms of the Basarab House changed through history:

- by cadencing the inherited arms for differentiation: changing tinctures and their order, new charges' addition with political-religious significance, variation of the ordinaries' number;
- by assuming a new coat of arms: arms of the defeated as victor's customary right, heraldic composition with stern political-religious meaning, or arms of pretence;
- by augmentation conferred by suzerain: marshalling, addition/conferring of new charges in the empty quarter or conferring a coat of arms utterly different from the one inherited.

It is a very strong possibility that the Catholic-Orthodox ambivalence shown in politics by Vlaicu, but also the Latin-Slavonic one manifested in monetary issues, would have extended on the heraldic emblem itself. At Argeş coexisted in his time two coat of arms equally cherished, both demonstrating dynastic cardinal accomplishments: the Bulgar imperial colors, as a symbol of the union of the two families around 1323, and the Angevin colors, as assumed arms after 1330. The first could be used in relation with the Orthodox world, and the other in front of the Catholic world. This duplicity will end with the reign of Dan I, but in the numismatic field occasionally will appear wrong heraldic data: mint marks, copying or engraving mistakes. These could lead inclusive to errors of evaluation in this very text.

[99] A document issued by boyar Aldea and his wife Bisa in November 21, 1398, suggests in context that he was Mircea's brother. See *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, B series Wallachia, volume 1, document 19, pp. 46-47.

In summary, in our study we reached the following conclusions:

- the coat of arms burely of Tsar John Asen II originated in assumption of a vanquished Latin armiger's arms, either Villain of Looz (Rusium victory from 1206) or Boniface, king of Thessalonica, after Messinopolis (1207);
- Despot Alexis Slav's arms augmented by dimidiation of Asen insignia with the tincture azure specific to the imperial rank of *despot*, may be a heraldic ancestor for the House of Basarab's coat of arms;
- the bird depicted on the Basarab's arms could be originally a *partridge*, canting arms for Făgăraş allodial land (fogoros = hunting ground for partridges);
- arms marshalling was at the end of 13th European century the preferred augmentation, justifying the acquisition of new territories by marriage or by sword; in such event should be looked the reason for Basarab's heraldic dimidiation, maybe inherited from Asenid emperors and despots, maybe the acquiring of the Banate of Severin (Lesser Wallachia) in year 1324;
- the war trophy consisting in blazoned weapons of king Charles Robert was part of Basarab's heraldic treasure: the coat of arms was assumed by the victor, Basarab I, and the battle flag was carried in battle by following Wallachian voivodes, his grandson Radu I included;
- *Her Raeskin de Scoonavaer* (aka *Raczek de Vleskovic Derslawiz*) from Gelre Armorial is one and the same with Radu I, voivode of Wallachia;
- the short list of those who could be buried in tomb no. 10 from Argeş II church is made of two: AL VA (Aldea, Albu, Alexander), son of Basarab I, and Transylvanian voivode Andreas Lackfi;
- heraldic cadency of Basarab arms with charges having religious and political meanings constituted effective means of propaganda by coin striking; the method was used by many voivodes, but mostly by Vladislav I, Radu I, Mircea I, Vlad I and Vladislav II;
- the monogram **Θ** was the first cadency of Basarab arms, representing Radu I and his sons Dan I and Mircea I;
- the monogram **ω** was the second form of cadency, representing Mircea I;
- Basarab II assumed on his coins as arms of pretence a coat of arms which is a synthesis between Asen, Shishman and Basarab dynastic Houses;
- the double monogram crescent – six-ray star confirms from heraldic perspective the Wallachian submission to the Ottoman suzerainty following the conclusion of the Treaty of Adrianople in 1451, influence who lasted for 426 years.

The laboratory data of Romanian Academy GENESIS project suggests that the heraldic buttons from tomb no. 10 of Argeş are almost contemporary with the first monetary issue who display Basarab coat of arms, that of Vladislav I Vlaicu, being a credible source regarding the shape, content and, above all, the colors of

the princely family heraldic emblem, at least for Iohannitsa Basarab I, Nicholas Alexander and Vladislav I Vlaicu.

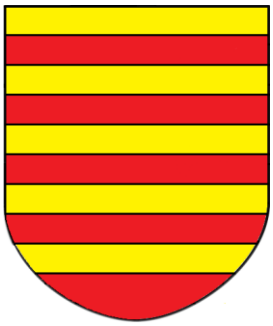
Some of voivodes who by virtue of their role of Christians and army commanders had frequent contacts with Western political and military leaders, were quite interested in heraldic symbolism inherited from their ancestors. However, they did not consider it sacrosanct and combined the classical dynasty emblem with symbolic imagination to make public their political choices, and to mark major events occurred during their reigns, a visual form of propaganda. Disseminating this information was made using the material with maximal circulation of the feudal era, the currency.

Decreasing skill and heraldic knowledge of mint engravers led in the 15th century to transform the striped field of eight pieces to five, four, three or two bars, aspect bearing no more heraldic value. Regarding the symbols used to charge the senester field, we believe they were authentic heraldic cadencies with important public and personal meanings which contemporaries knew and understood but were gradually lost in time. There were probably monetary issues having craftsmen trademarks placed by ignorance inside the shield, which makes more difficult today to distinguish cadency from manufacturer's mark. To decipher authentic heraldic symbols on the coins, we tried to establish connections between historical events involving the armigerous voivodes and their monetary issues. We found that such connections can be made.

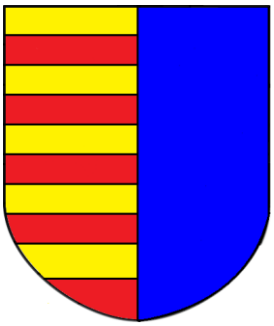
After 80 years of logos effervescence, since the middle of the 15th century after the second battle of Kossovopolje (1447) the design of Basarab arms has not change anymore, probably due to entering the orbit of a power which disliked or ignored the heraldic art: the Ottoman Empire. There were also members of the dynasty that used in parallel or exclusively personal heraldic insignia different from the classic line of barry and dimidiated. Those were either assumed, such as did Dan II or Basarab II, or given by their overlords according to western chivalry customs, as Mircea I, Basarab II and Vladislav II.

With the Turkish vassalage, there is no historical evidence of using the Basarab House arms anymore. Voivodes of this dynasty preferred to use the state emblem, originating too from a section of the Basarab coat of arms, the crest. The recursant bird, either partridge, raven or eagle, remained an essential heraldic symbol until today, continuing to represent both the reigning prince and Wallachia itself as entity of international law, even after the founding dynasty's extinction.

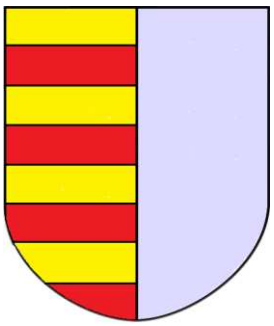
The following are the probable chronological development of Basarab House's heraldry, in connection with arms of Asen and Shishman Houses:



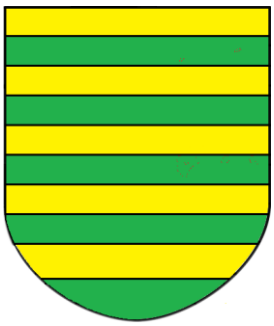
*Tsar John I Kaloyan (around 1206-1207)*
*Tsar John Asen II (1218), roy de blaque Wijnbergen*



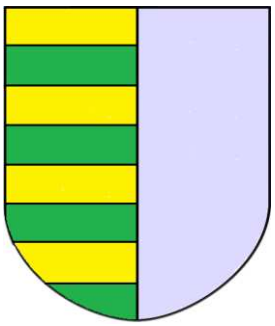
*Despot Alexius Slav (1208)*
*Nicola Lyutovoi (1246)*
*Barbath? (1285)*



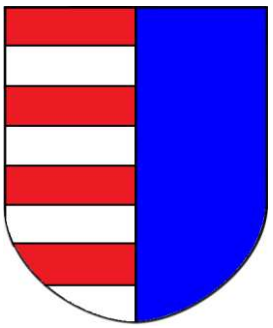
*Barbath? (1285)*
*Radu Tatomir (1291)*
*Basarab I (1315)*



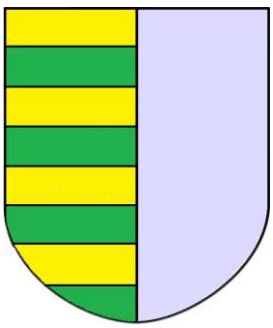
*Despot Shishman of Badin(1308)*
*Tsar Michael III Shishman (1323)*



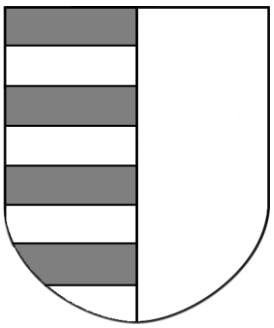
*Iohannitsa Basarab I, matrimonial alliance with House of Shishman (1324)*



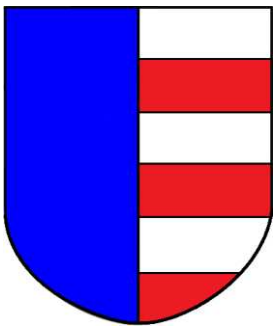
*Basarab I, assumed arms (1330)*



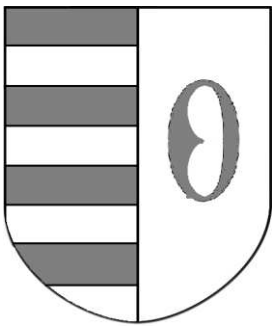
*AL VA, son of Basarab I (around 1364-1370)*
*Vladislav I (1365-1377)*



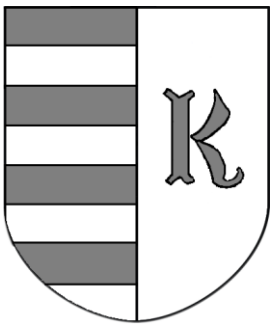
*Radu I (1377-1385)*



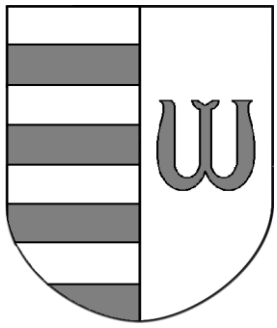
*Raeskin Scoonavaer*
*Raczek de Vloskovic Derslawiz in Gelre Armorial (1370-95)*



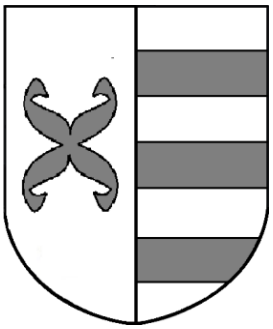
*Radu I, Dan I, Mircea I (1377-1418)*



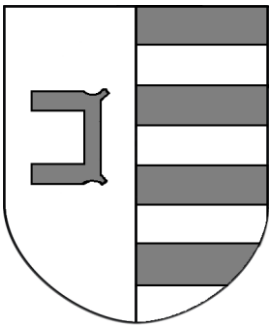
*Dan I, Mircea I, Vlad I (1385-1418)*



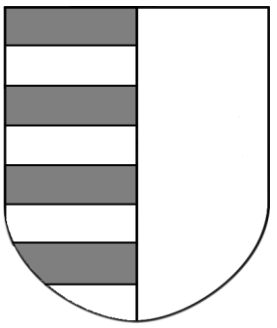
*Dan I, Mircea I (1385-1418)*



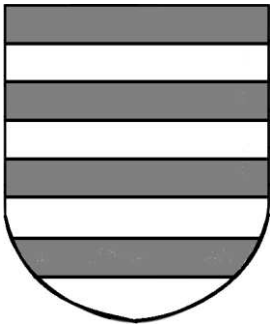
*Vlad I (1407)*



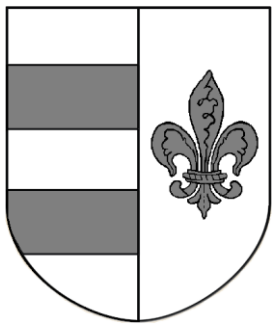
*Mircea I, Michael I (1386-1420)*



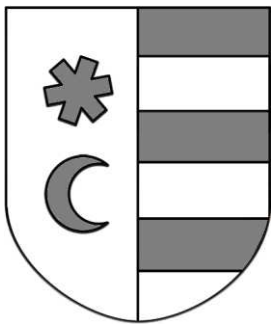
*Dan II (1427)*



*Basarab II (1443)*

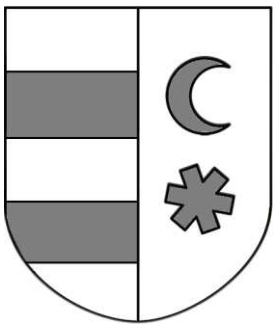


*Vladislav II vassal of Hungary (1448)*



*Vladislav II attacking Transylvania (1456)*

*Vladislav II, Vlad III, Radu III, Basarab III (1451-1476)*



*Basarab IV (1480)*

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